Vol.14

ROKUDA NOBORU

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VOL.14

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LIKE A ROLLING STONE

F

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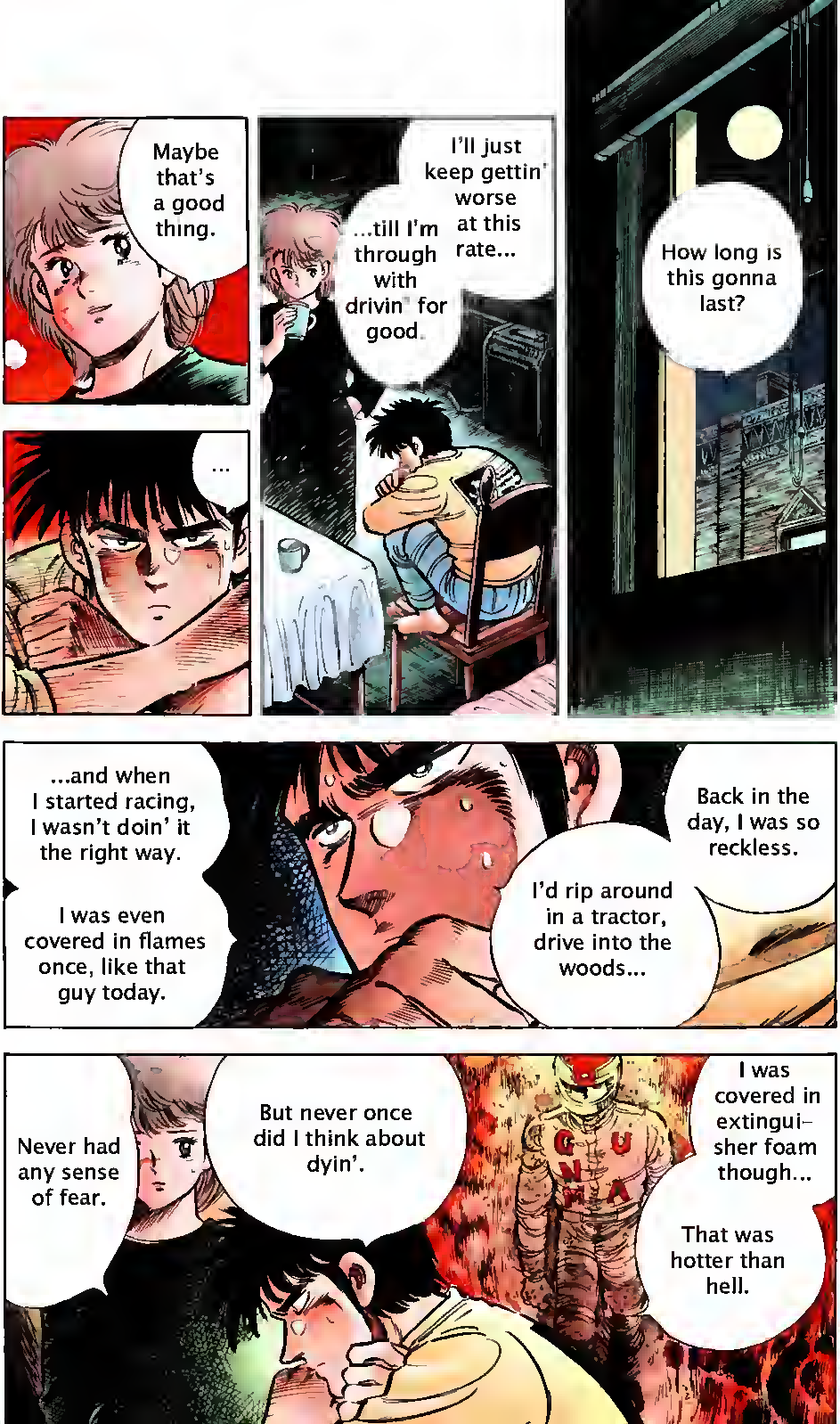
LIKE A ROLLING STONE

Chapter 1: Coward
Chapter 2: New Life
Chapter 3: The Beast
Chapter 4: Reunited
Chapter 5: Transformation
Chapter 6: Goddess of Luck
Chapter 7: Sleepy Town
Chapter 8: Bleeding it Out
Chapter 9: Hot Air
Chapter 10: Who the Goddess Prefers
Chapter 11: Like a Rolling Stone
Chapter 12: Man and Woman, Act II

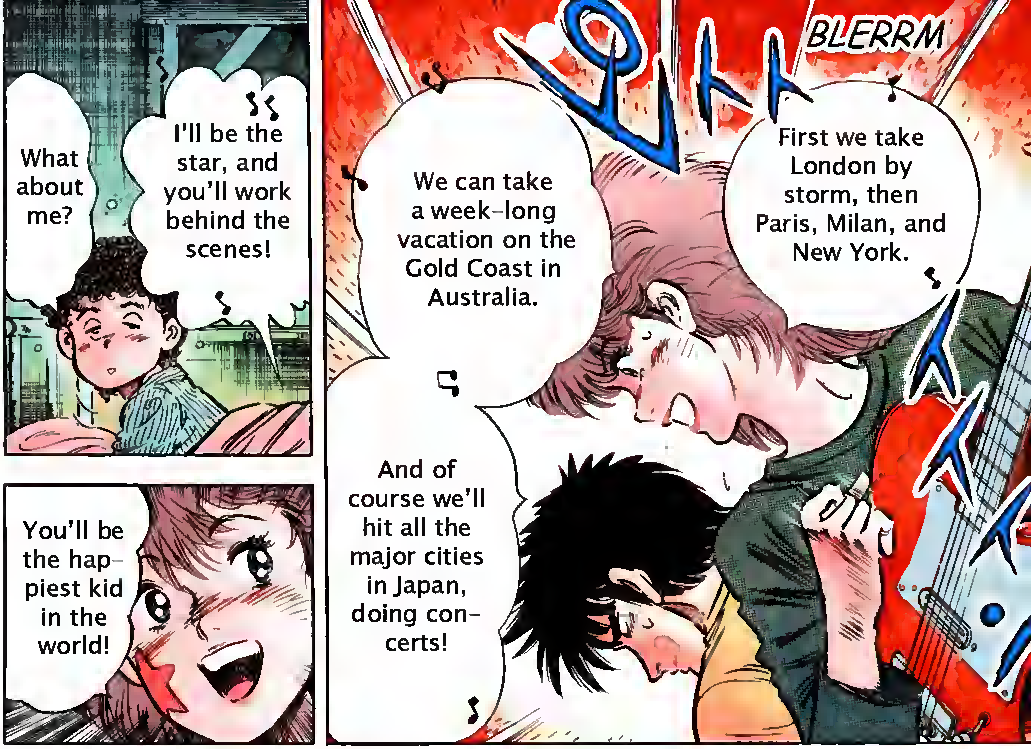
Chapter 1:
Coward
GEMINI OIL
NGK
PADDOCK
PEDESTRIAN
ON CIRCUIT

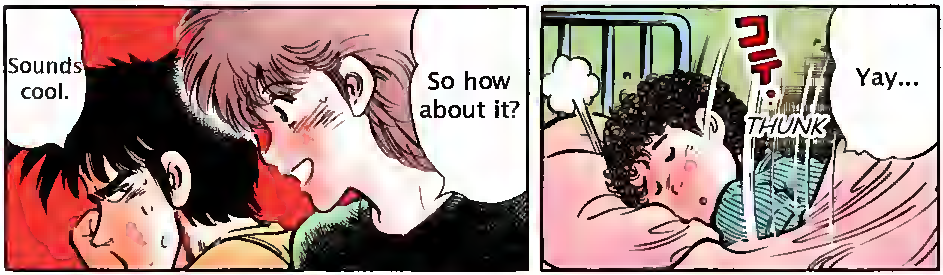
Nng...
Urrgh...
Urgh...
Angh...
がば
FWOOP
LENNON
AND SUNDAYS TOO!
Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff

GULULUL
ドボドボ
Huff
LINEN
AND SUNDAYS
Too!
What's happe-ning...?
ごびぐび
GULP GULP
I feel like a damn coward.
Pour me a cup too.
Just got a little thirsty.
Can't sleep?
...


How long is this gonna last?
I'll just keep gettin' worse at this rate...
...till I'm through with drivin' for good.
Maybe that's a good thing.
...
Back in the day, I was so reckless.
I'd rip around in a tractor, drive into the woods...
...and when I started racing, I wasn't doin' it the right way.
I was even covered in flames once, like that guy today.
I was covered in extinguisher foam though...
That was hotter than hell.
But never once did I think about dyin'.
Never had any sense of fear.

Maybe it's time to quit racing.
!?
Maybe it's your chance.
...
Dammit... What's happenin' to me?
I can make enough money singing to support all of us.
Yeah... If you're afraid of racing now, just let go of it...
...and settle down with Peabow and me.
Hm hm... You'll be manager.
So what am I, a freeloader?
...
...and live together forever. Just the three of us!
You work as my manager, and I'll sing professionally.
I'll release a bunch of records, we'll tour the world...
LENNON


What about me?
I'll be the star, and you'll work behind the scenes!
You'll be the happiest kid in the world!
BLERRM
We can take a week-long vacation on the Gold Coast in Australia.
First we take London by storm, then Paris, Milan, and New York.
And of course we'll hit all the major cities in Japan, doing concerts!

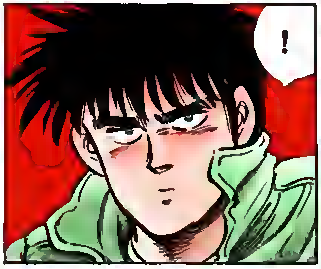

Sounds cool.
So how about it?
THUNK
Yay...

Yeah. Somethin' to think about.
It does, doesn't it?

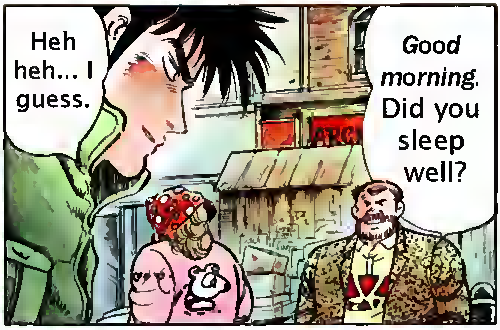
Sako...
RENTA
SLAM
Sorry about that. Let's go.
Oh, right.
Are you getting out, or what?
Yeah, I agree.
And it's quite the shady area she's living in.
Your lady friend must be sleeping at this hour.
VRRRR

S.M.C

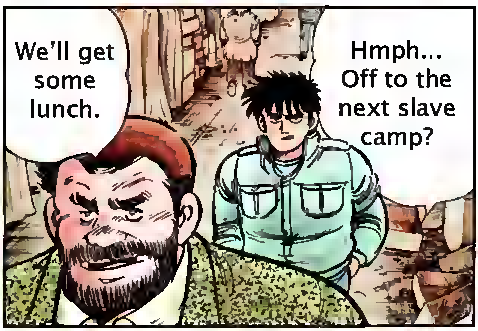
YAK
YAK
YAK
COUP
travel


!

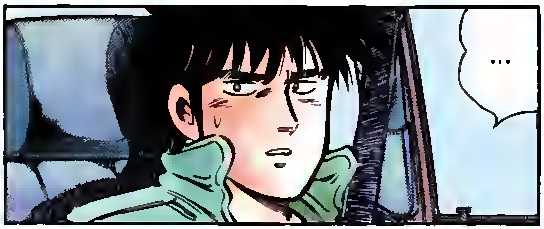
Your work at Silverstone is done. Get in.
NEW ZEALAND


Heh heh... I guess.
Good morning. Did you sleep well?

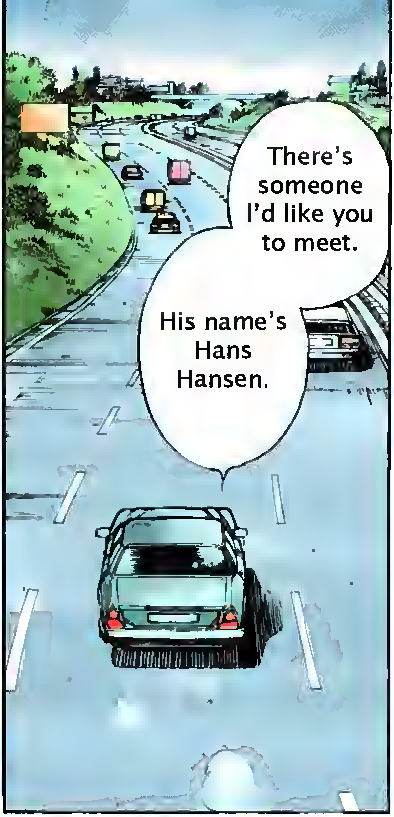
Really?

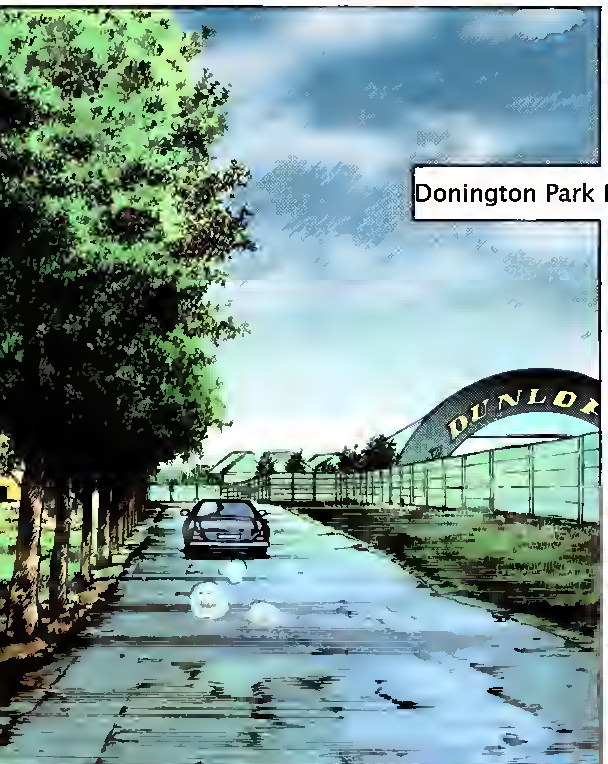

We'll get some lunch.
Hmph... Off to the next slave camp?

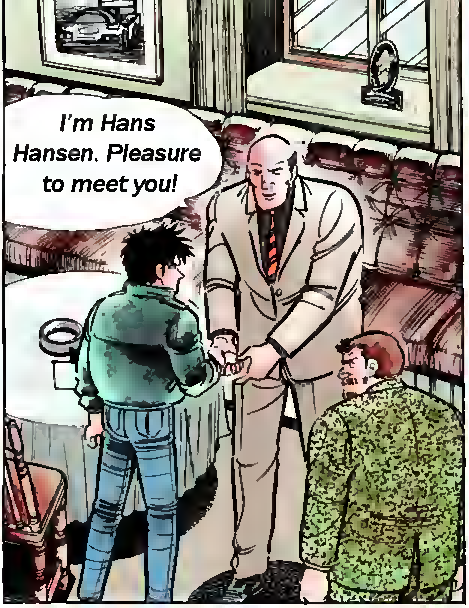
Head of Hans Racing Team, and he's looking for an F3000 driver.


...

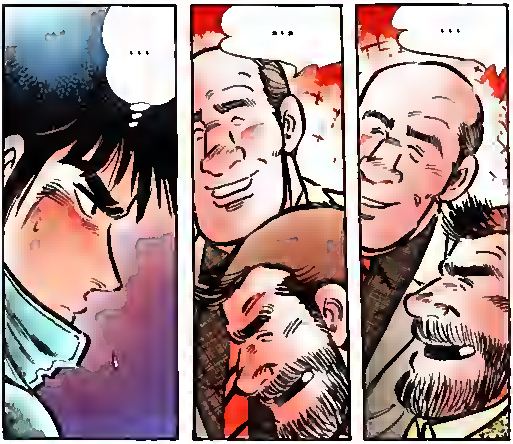
GRIN
ニヤ


There's someone I'd like you to meet.
His name's Hans Hansen.


Donington Park Racing Circuit


I'm Hans Hansen. Pleasure to meet you!

Redgate Lodge
A restaurant at the circuit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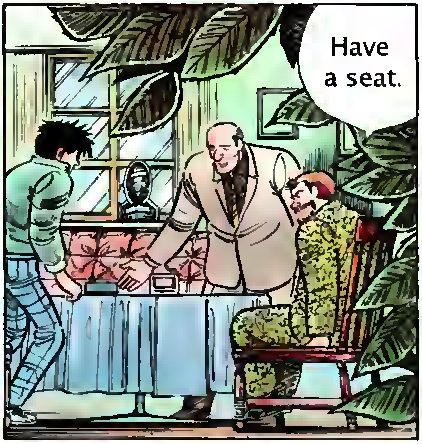
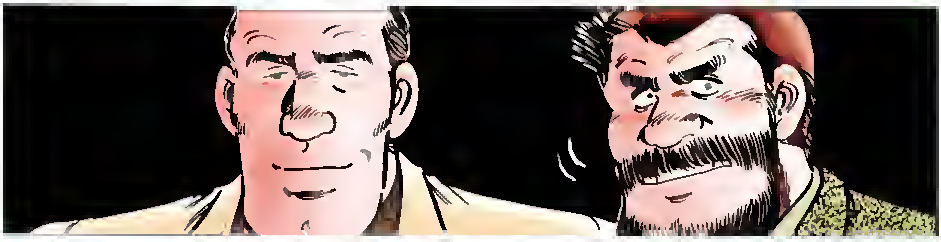
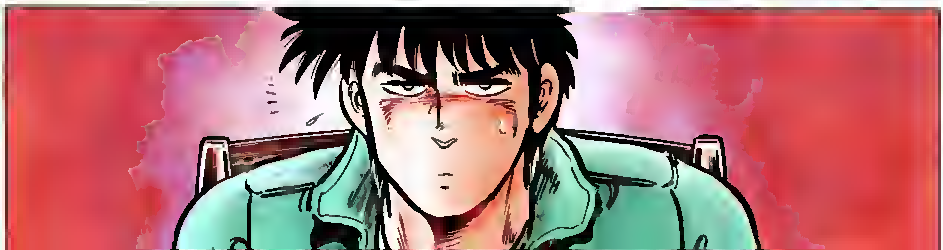
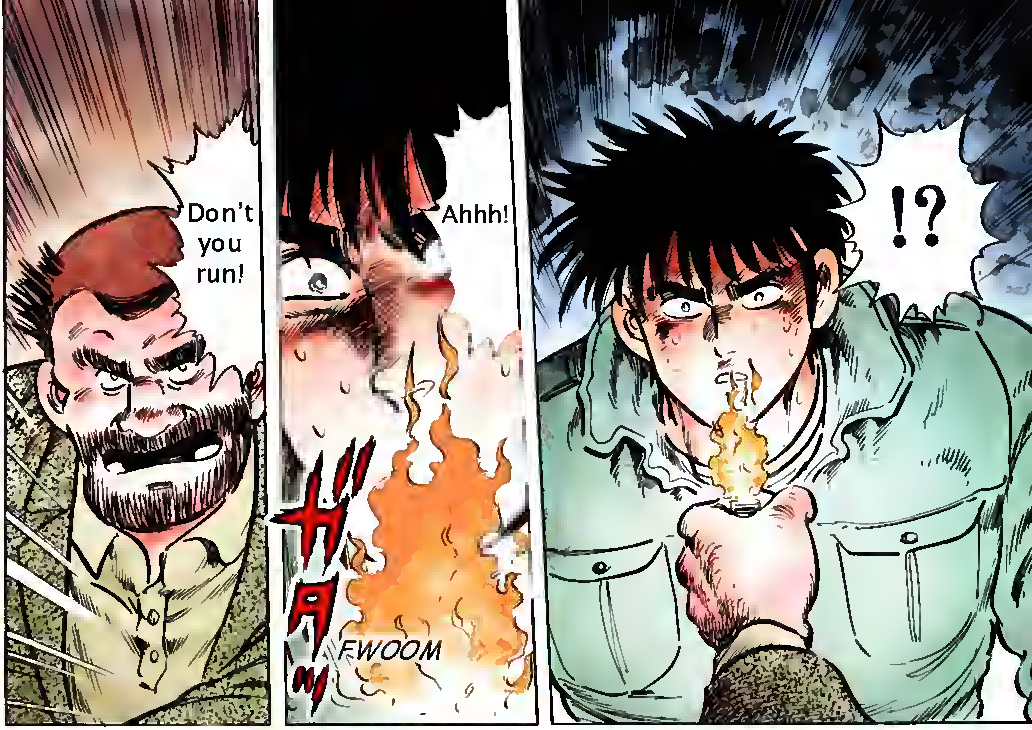
...

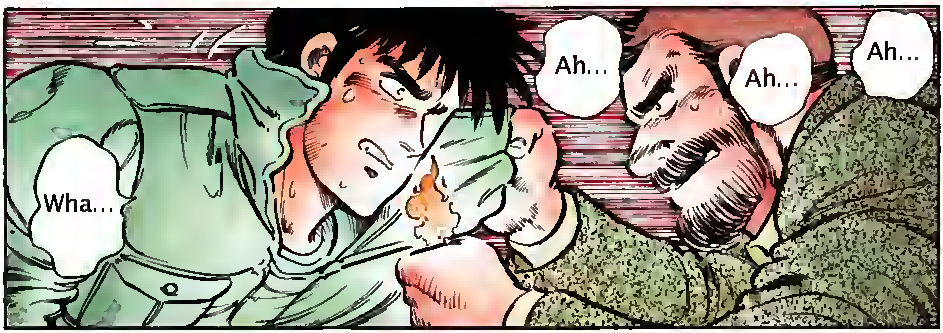

Have a seat.

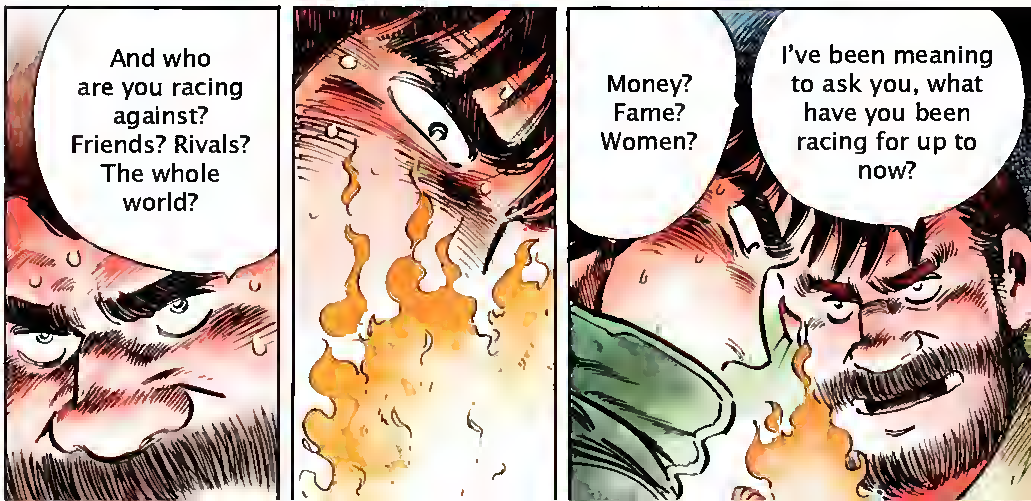


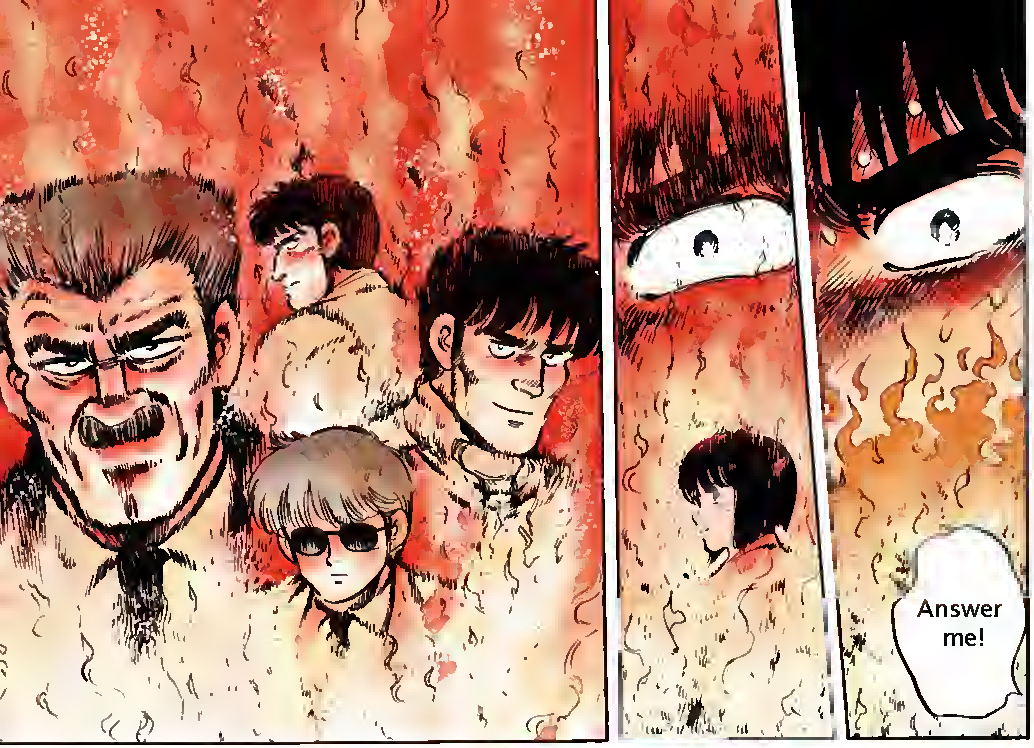


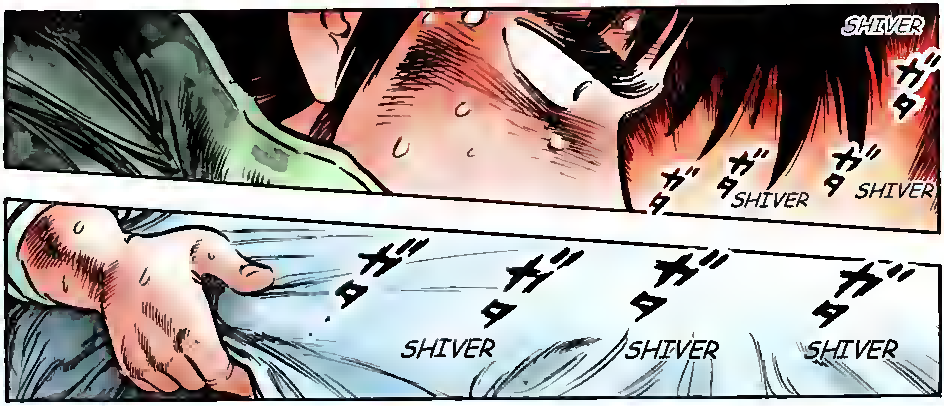
Gunma, this is a contract. Sign here, and you'll be under contract with Hans Racing as their driver for next season.
So how about it?
Are you serious!?
Of course. You'll be driving a Reynard 88D with a Nicho-lson DFV engine.
That's what Roberto Moreno drove this season, and he was series champion.
So are you gonna sign?
Hell yes!
Hans says he wants to test you first. Just drive a few laps around the Donington here, okay?
You bet.
Oh, and take a look at this.
?
POOF

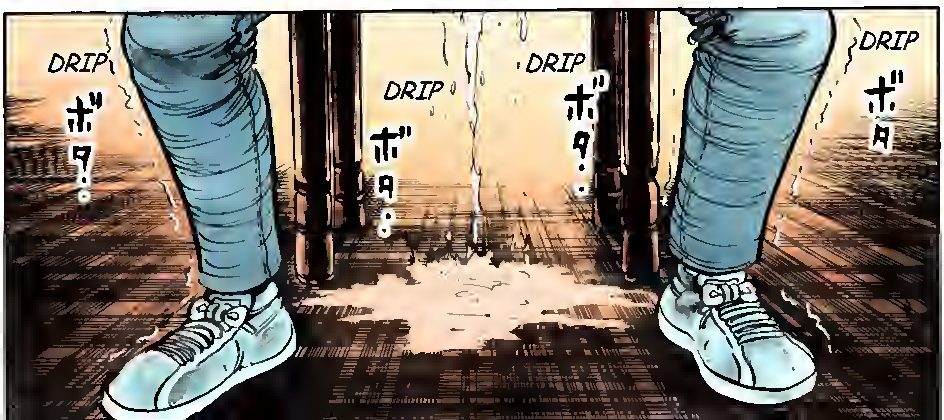

Don't you run!
Ahhh!
FWOOM
!?


Wha...
Ah...
Ah...
Ah...

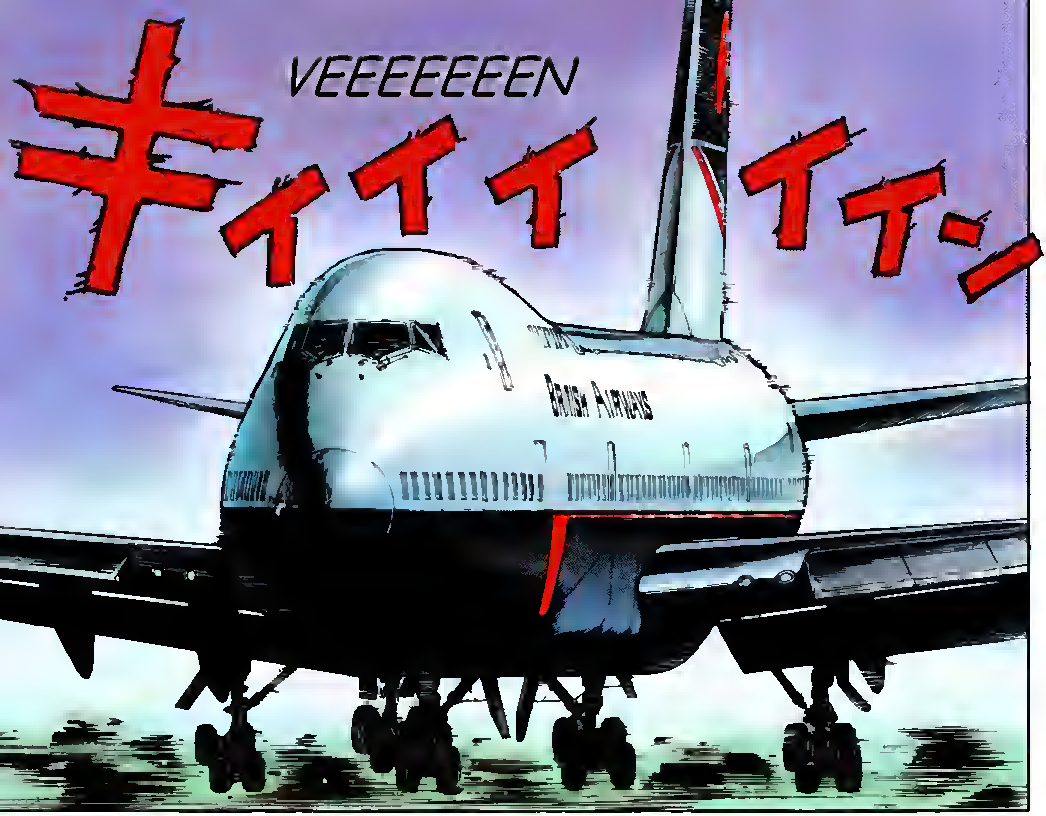

And who are you racing against? Friends? Rivals? The whole world?
Money? Fame? Women?
I've been meaning to ask you, what have you been racing for up to now?

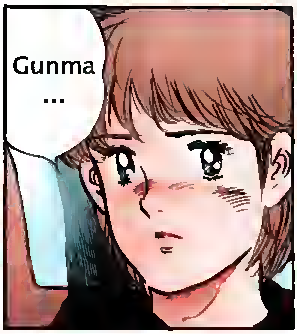

Answer me!

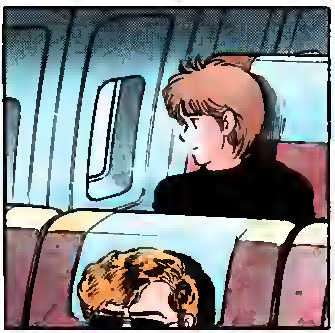

SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER

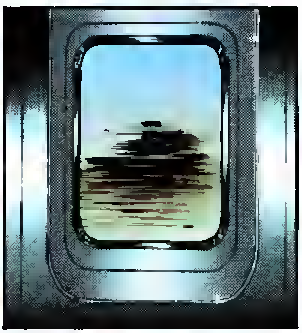

DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP

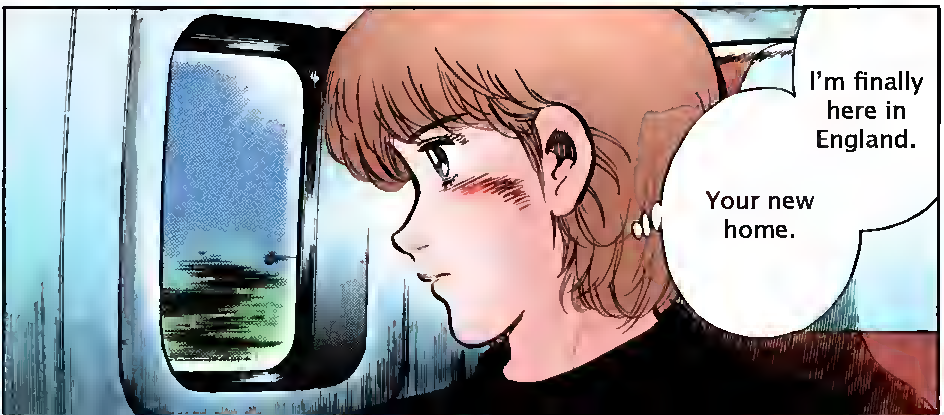
Who I've gotta race against.
I see now.
...
SHUK
カッ
Nice! You just pissed yourself!
I think it's myself.
Yeah? Well who is it?
Good! Let's do the test!
Lucas
Lucas


VEEEEEEEN
キイイイイイン
BRITISH AIRWAYS

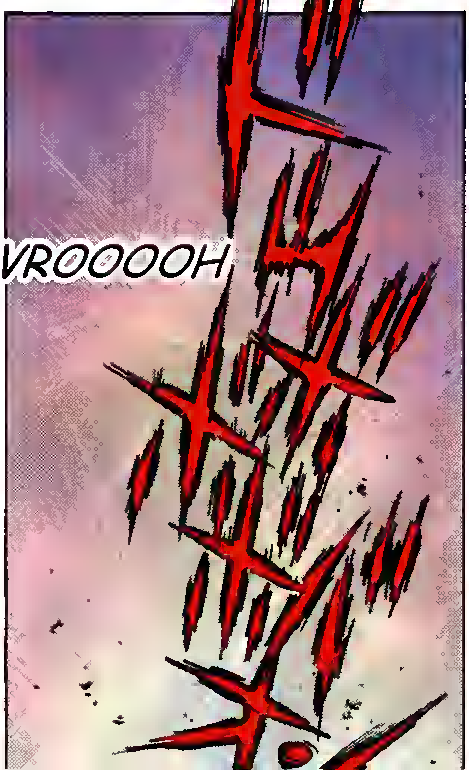

Gunma
...





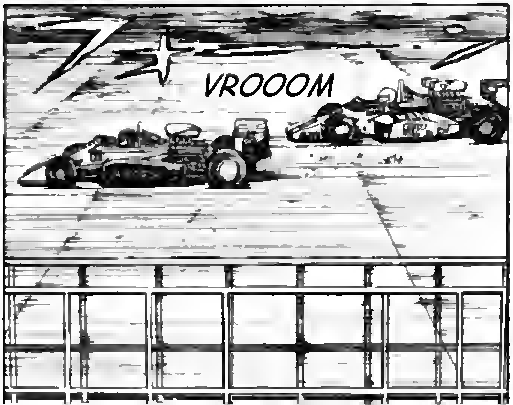

I'm finally here in England.
Your new home.

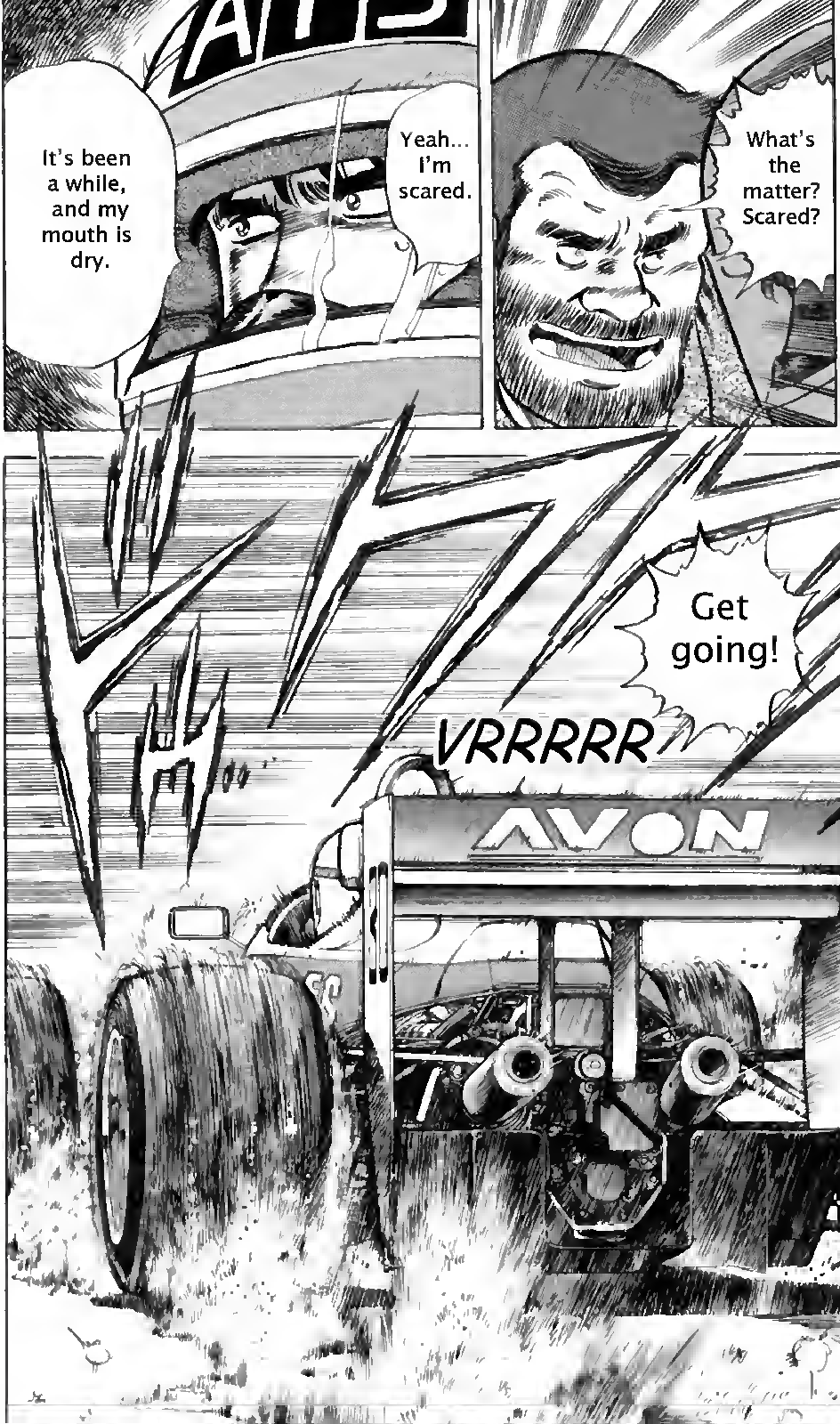
Finally.


VROOOOH

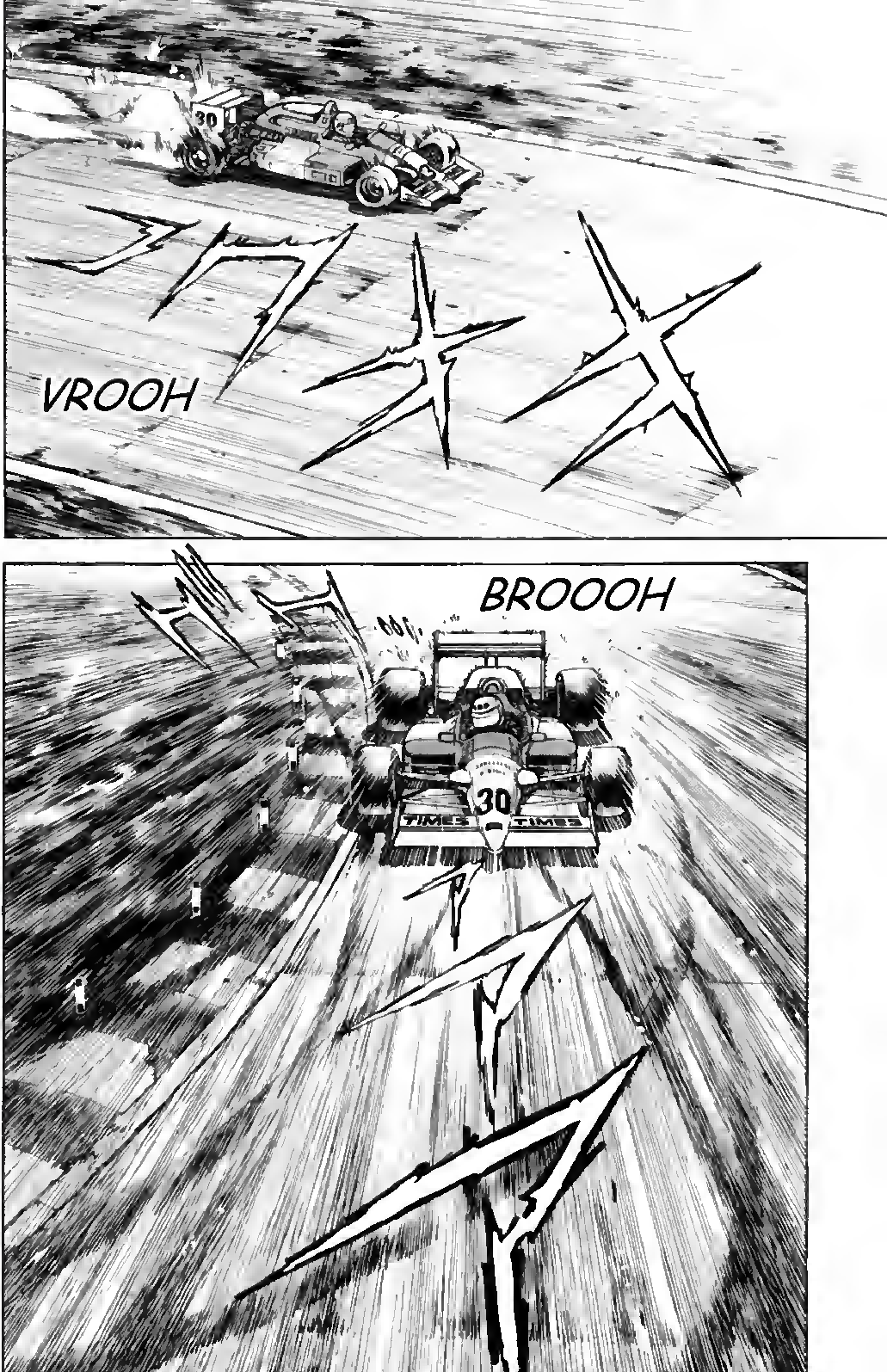
VROH
VROH
VROH
VR VR VR VR
ZOOOM

Just stay out of their way, all right?
There's about five other cars on the track.

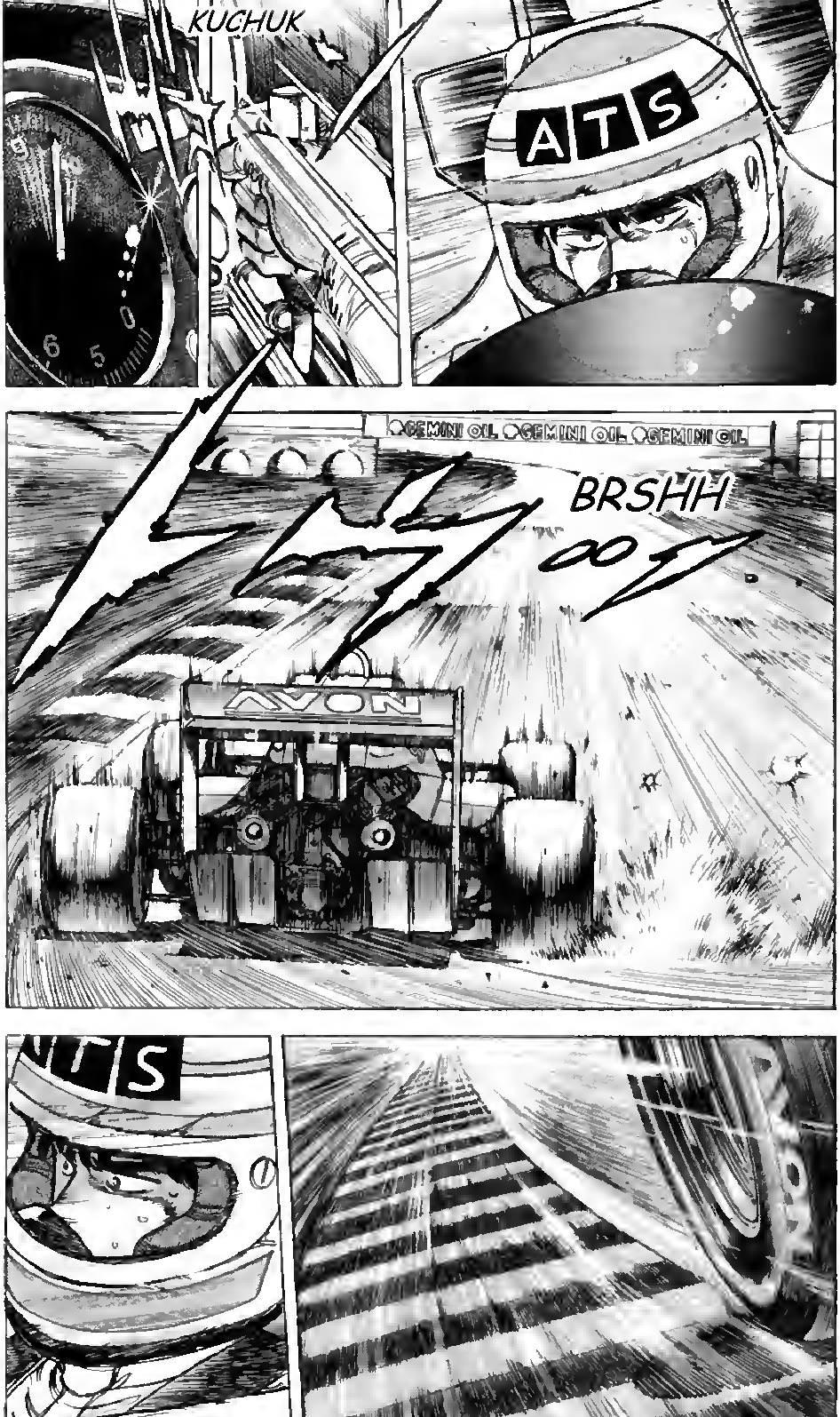

VROOOM


It's been a while, and my mouth is dry.
Yeah... I'm scared.
What's the matter? Scared?
Get going!
VRRRRR
AVON

Chapter 2:
New Life


30
VROOH
BROOOH
30
TIMES
TIMES

FWOOH
ZOOOOOM


KUCHUK
ATS
GEMINI OIL GEMINI OIL GEMINI OIL
BRSHH
AVON

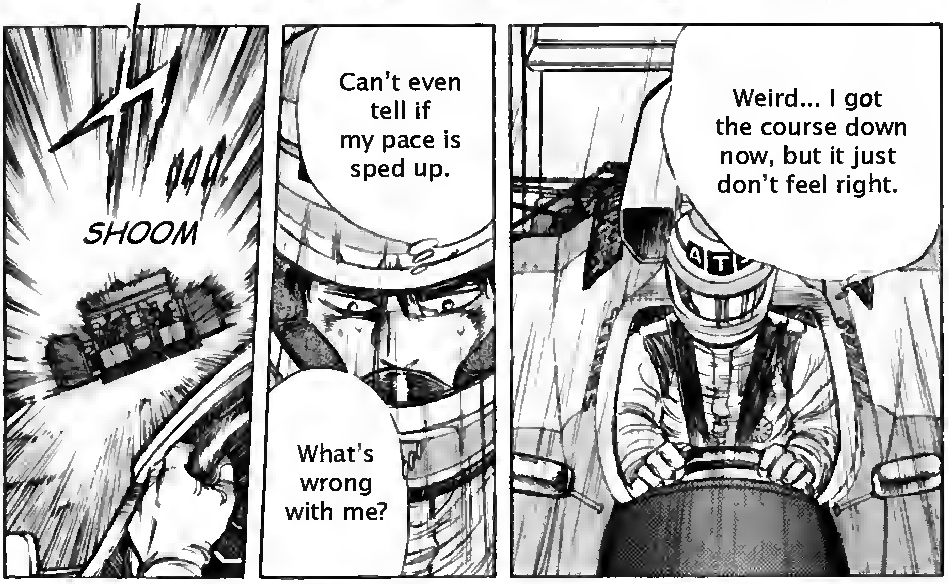
ZOOOOOM
It's a hill.
SHUK
I... I can't see nothin' ahead!
SCREEECH
30

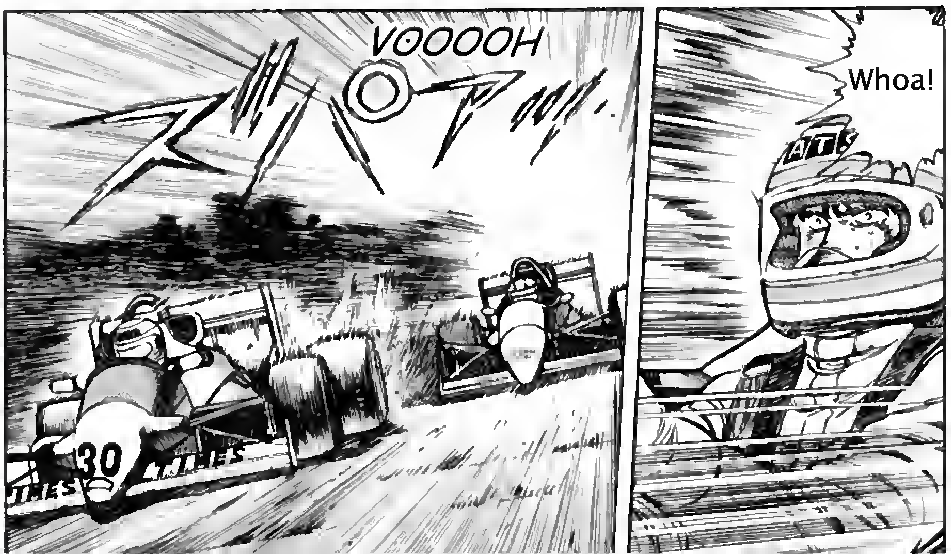
Whoa!
SHOOM
AVON
SCREESCREECH
30

Aw man...
This car's got crazy power...
...and drivin' this course for the first time...
...it's a little scary, to be honest.
Don't look at me like that.
BRAAAH
Lemme get a feel for the course first, then I'll impress ya...
You can't expect me to go full throttle on my first run.
AVON

FWOOH
RATTLE
RATTLE
It feels three, maybe four times more powerful than F3.
But this car... I never felt so much power before.
And I'm sweatin' like a pig in this thing.
It's so damn tight, my head feels like it's gonna pop.
And this helmet don't fit right.
VREHHH
Geez... I'm gonna puke.
30
And this sweat's foggin' up my vision.
I've only done one lap.
Well?
I've seen enough.
SHOOM

You seem quick to decide.
I'm an impatient man.
Give him two or three more laps and call him back to the pit.


SHOOM
Can't even tell if my pace is sped up.
What's wrong with me?
Weird... I got the course down now, but it just don't feel right.


VOOOOH
30
Whoa!

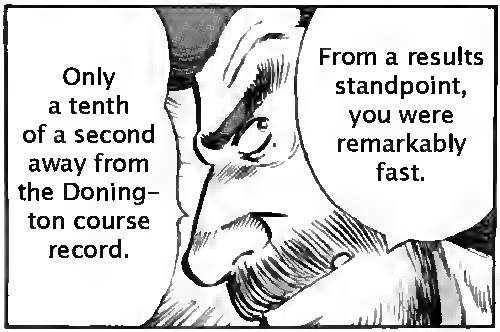
VROOH
Can't fail this test.
Can't crash at a time like this.
...how come he slowed down like that?
What the hell...
KRUK
Dam-mit.
It's like fear is breathin' down my neck.
But some-thin' just don't feel right.
I ain't my usual self out here.
...even if I don't crash, I'll never pass this test!
At this rate...
I'm a nervous wreck in this thing.
Pit

...
Agip
I've only done three laps!
What? They want me back in the pit already?
What's the problem?
I only went three, maybe four laps.
Urgh ...
ZOOM
30
TIME
BLEHHHCH
BLEH'

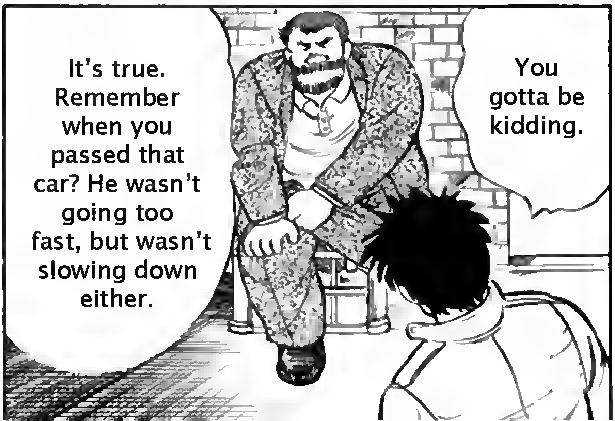
But I didn't have enough time to get goin'.
No no, don't overdo it. Your guts are just reacting to G's they haven't felt in a while.
Yeah, I'm fine now.
You okay?
Let me give it another go.
!
Hans said he's seen enough.
I failed the test?
What's that supposed to mean?
I'd like you to sign on with us, Gunma.
Just the opposite.

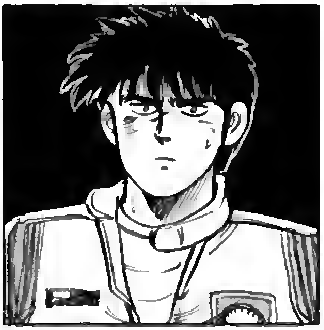
Didn't even know your own pace, and thought you were drivin' too slow.
Right?
Yeah.
It looked awkward, out of sync.
You didn't seem comfor-table out there.
Coke

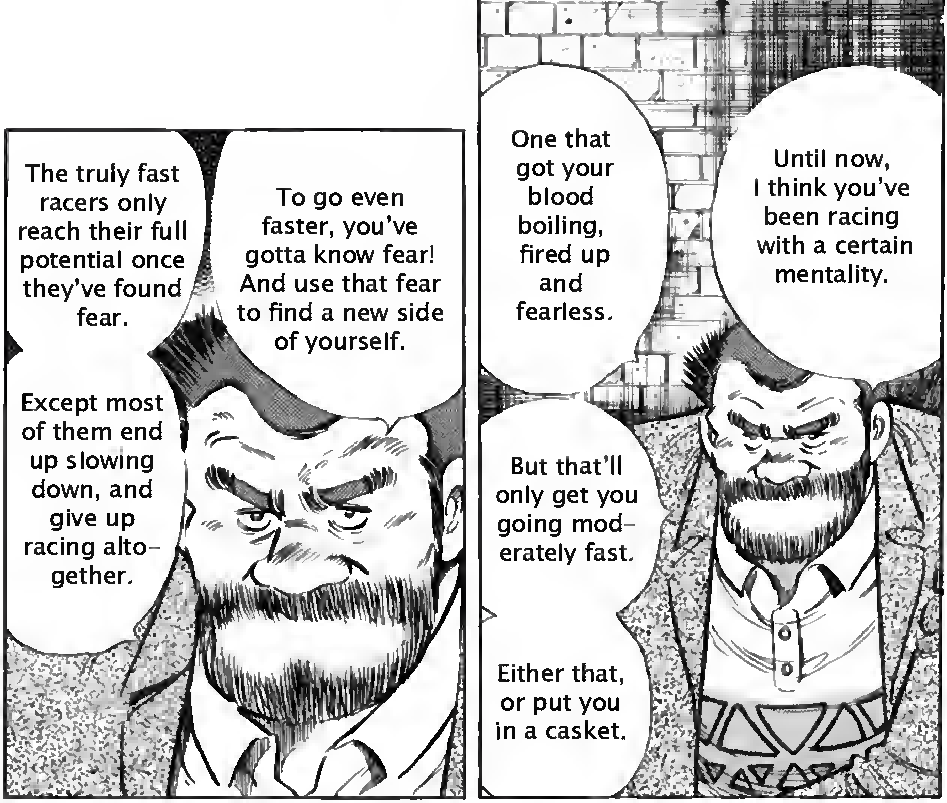
And besides...
Heh heh... That's only natural when driving for the first time in a while.

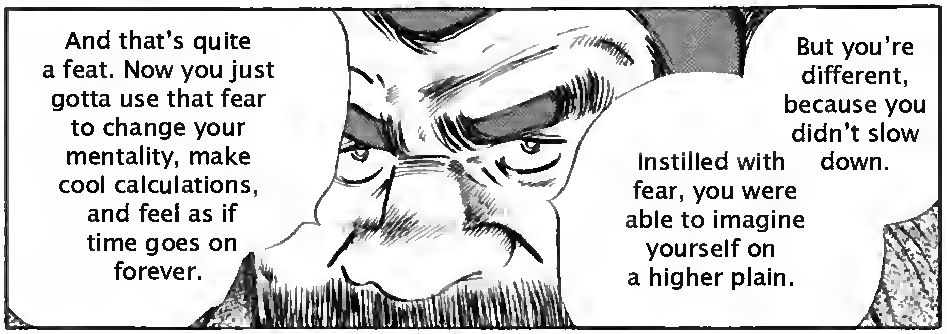

Only a tenth of a second away from the Doning-ton course record.
From a results standpoint, you were remarkably fast.

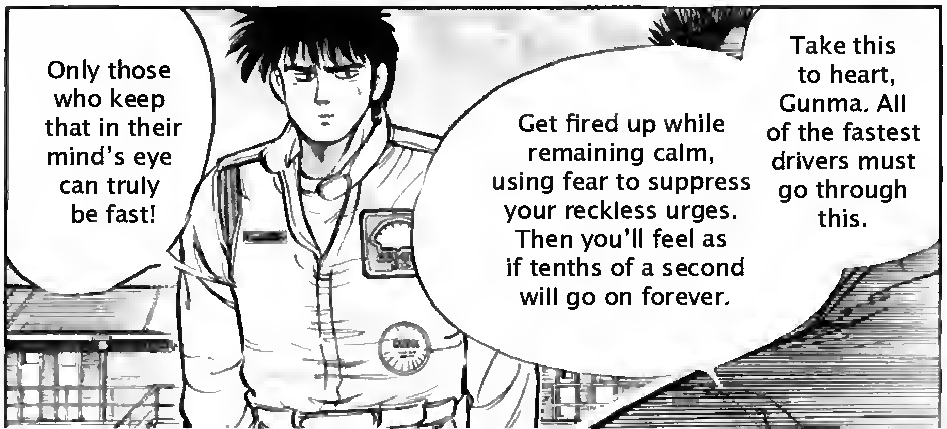
It's not easy to get back in rhythm.
...you've made a new friendship with fear.
LIST


It's true. Remember when you passed that car? He wasn't going too fast, but wasn't slowing down either.
You gotta be kidding.



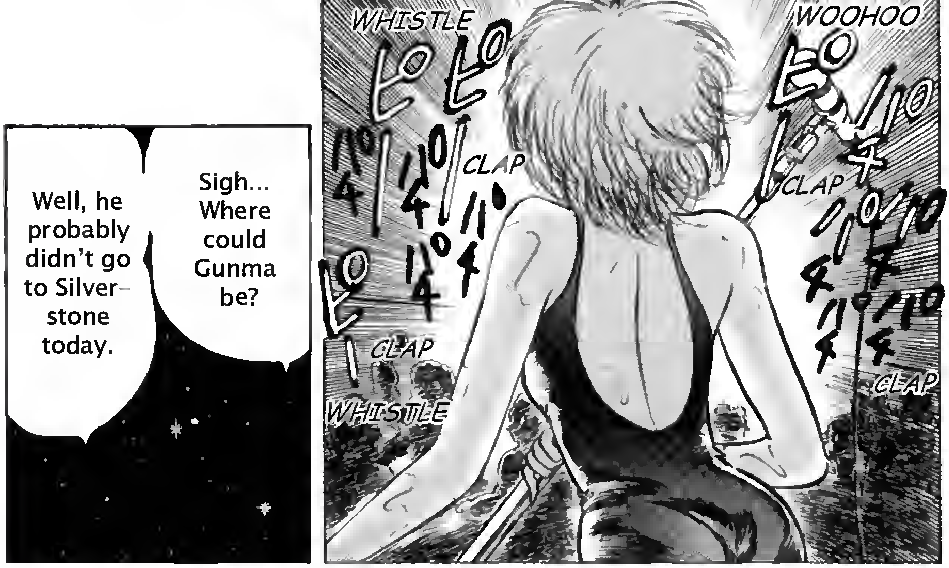

Until now, I think you've been racing with a certain mentality.
One that got your blood boiling, fired up and fearless.
But that'll only get you going moderately fast.
Either that, or put you in a casket.
To go even faster, you've gotta know fear! And use that fear to find a new side of yourself.
The truly fast racers only reach their full potential once they've found fear.
Except most of them end up slowing down, and give up racing altogether.

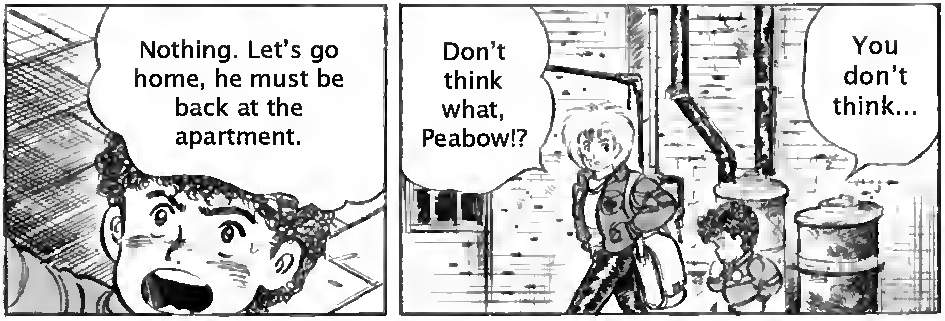

But you're different, because you didn't slow down.
Instilled with fear, you were able to imagine yourself on a higher plain.
And that's quite a feat. Now you just gotta use that fear to change your mentality, make cool calculations, and feel as if time goes on forever.


Take this to heart, Gunma. All of the fastest drivers must go through this.
Get fired up while remaining calm, using fear to suppress your reckless urges. Then you'll feel as if tenths of a second will go on forever.
Only those who keep that in their mind's eye can truly be fast!

Do you see now, why Hans is so eager to have you sign that contract?
GRIN
GRIP

What the hell is this!?
PIT ★★
GRIP
After racing for the first time in a while, I feel...
I need a wo-man!
HUFF
I can't hold this back.
...horny.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF


Sigh... Where could Gunma be?
Well, he probably didn't go to Silver-stone today.
WHISTLE
WOOHOO
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
WHISTLE

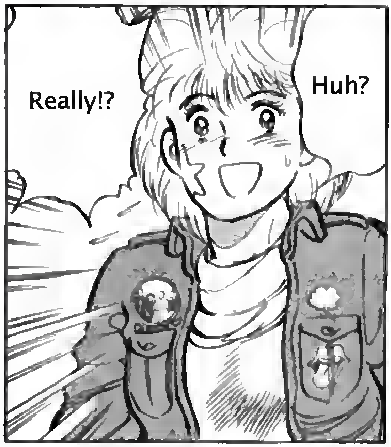

Nothing. Let's go home, he must be back at the apartment.
Don't think what, Peabow!?
You don't think...

Okay, sure...
...?
...me and Sako need a little alone time.
Sorry Peabow, but tonight...

He came home, just like any day.
What a relief. I thought Gunma might have left us.
Oh well.
But he seems kind of weird today, like a beast.
!?
...

Chapter 3:
The Beast

You seem different, Gunma. Everything okay?

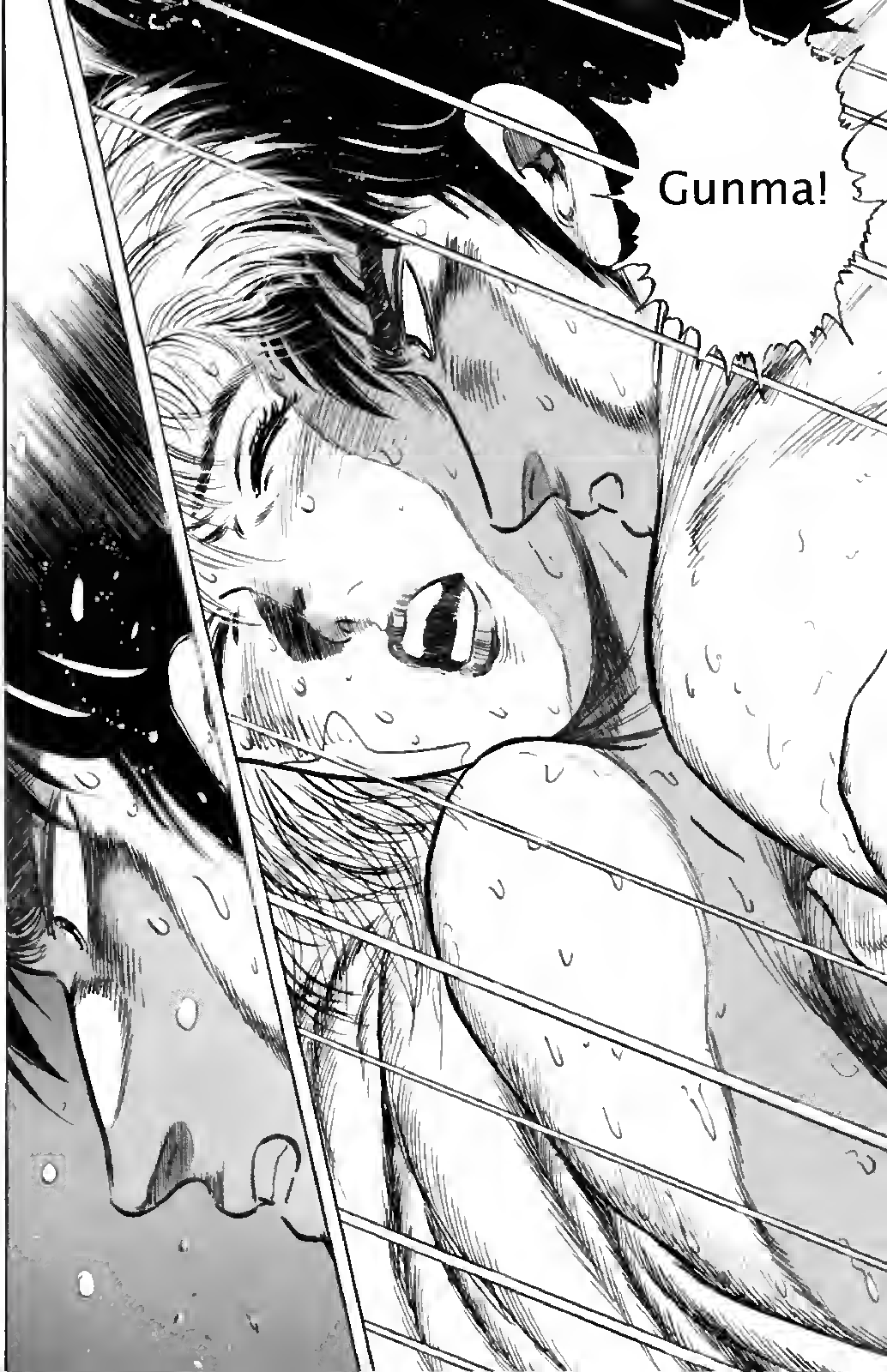

Really!?
Huh?

I'm gonna be racing F3000 next season!
I signed a contract today.

...!
Sako...
GRIP
That's amazing!
Yeah, it's true. I joined up with a team called Hans Racing, and I'll be driving a Reynard 88D.
I want you.
...
Yeah... Let's do it!

...
IRRK
...
?
VRRRR
SLAM
...but I'm too scared.
I finally found his apartment...
Ah...
...

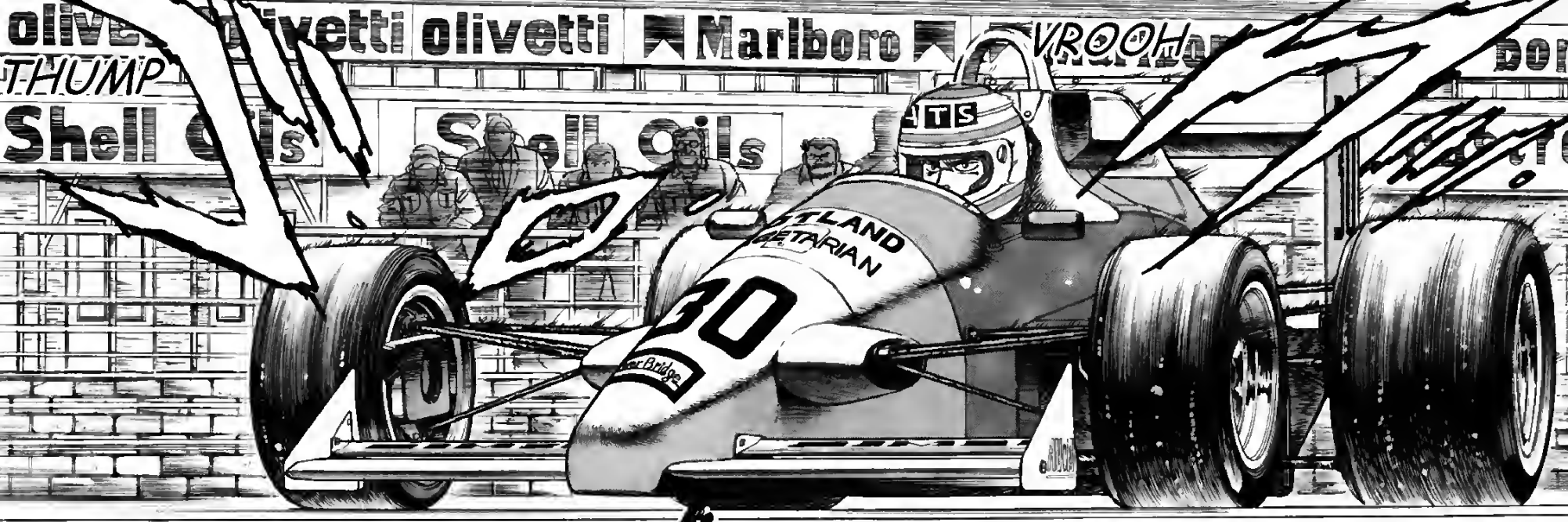
Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff
Uh
Ah
Ah
Gunma!
Ahh
Ahh


Gunma!

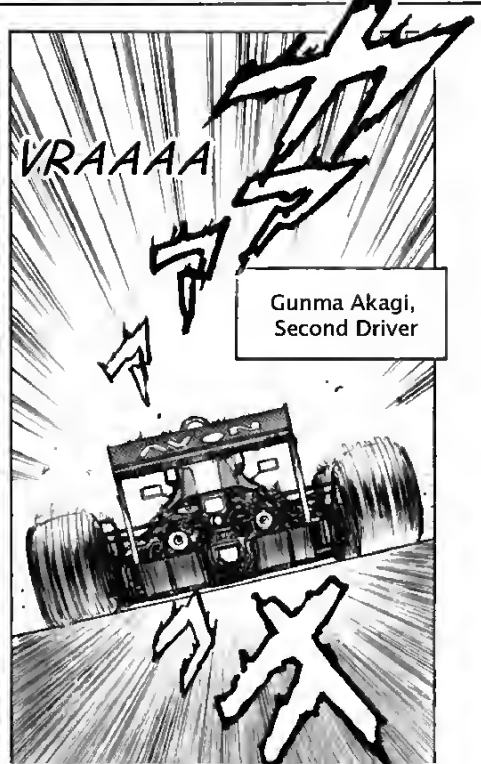
I'm so happy...
Really?
Amazing.
...feel good?
Did it...
Caught me by surprise.
You were incredible.
Hee hee...
Really.
...!
...beast.
Like some kind of...

Sorry about that.
No prob-lem.
Drinks are on me everyone!
Peabow.
How many times did you hit it?
Yeah?
Gun-ma...
You're always so generous, love!
Woohoo! Three cheers for Sako!
Never mind.
BUMP
A beast, huh...

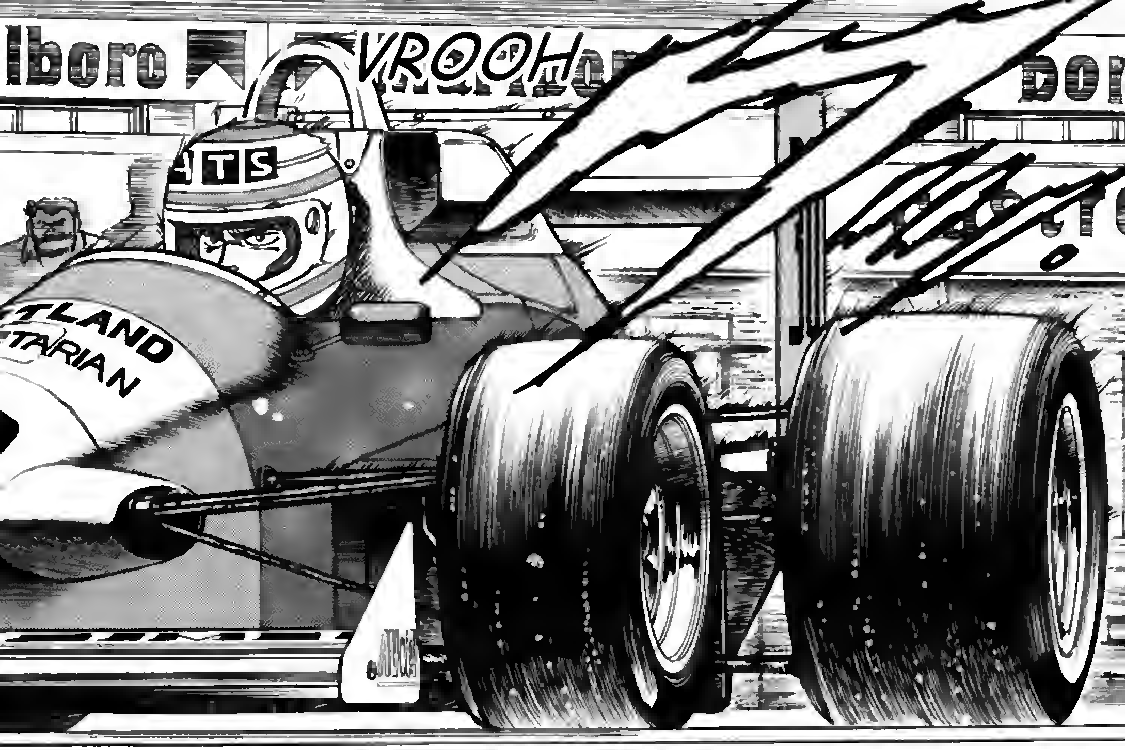
This time, it's goodbye for real.
Yuki...
Junko...
Maybe she's right.
Yeah...
I jus saw this strange lady.
You guys.
I'm okay.
Does the bonfire bother you, Gunma?
Probably Chinese.
Yeah, maybe.
Just kind of wandering.
And looked Japanese.
She seemed out of place, since tourists never come around here, especially at night.


olivetti
Marbello
VROOH
THUMP
Shell Oils
TS
30

HUAAH
GTA
DAVID
David Louis, Primary Driver

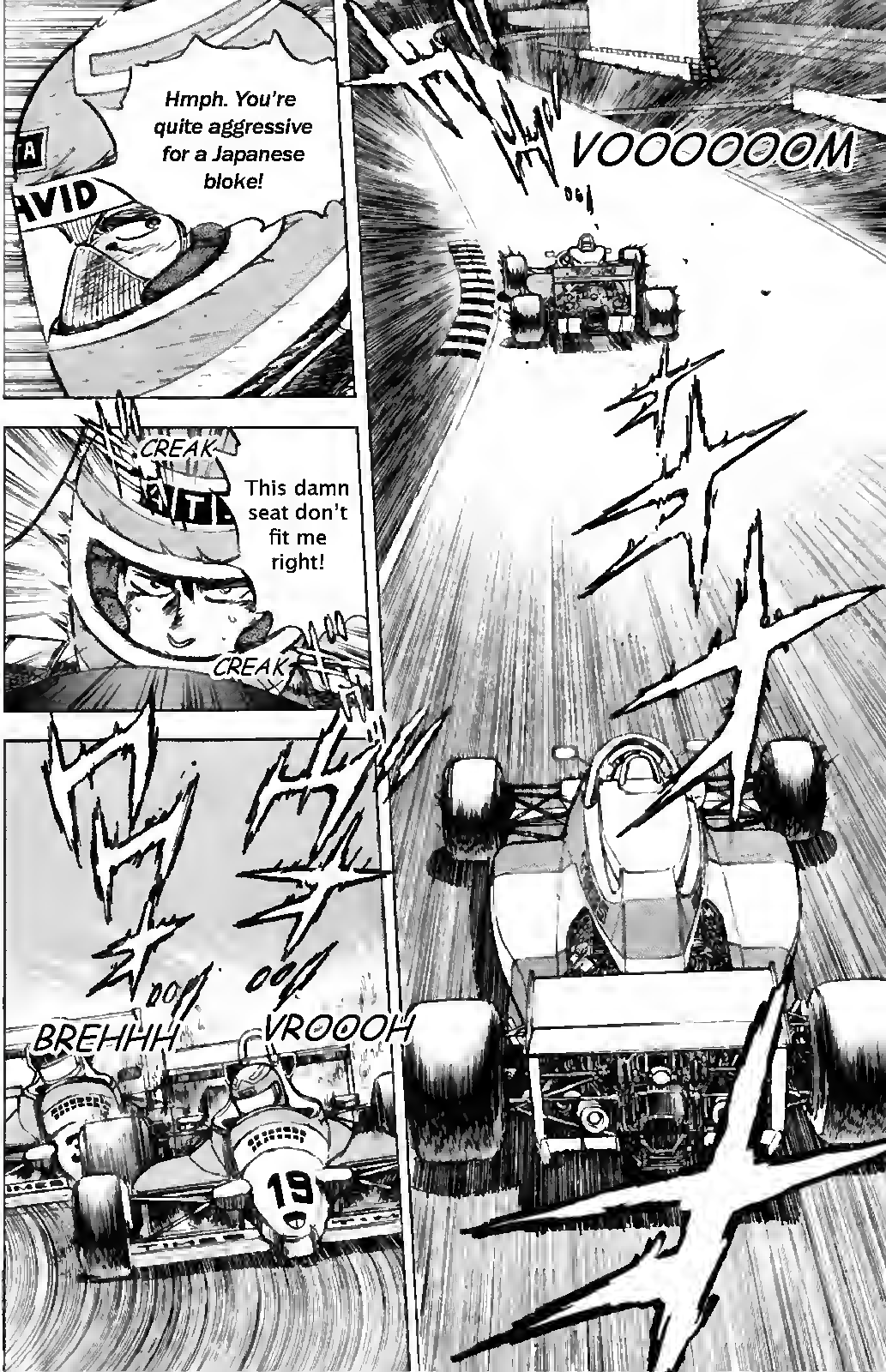

VRAAAA
Gunma Akagi, Second Driver

Ben Anderson, Team Manager
Larry Newman, Mechanic
Michael Collins, Chief Mechanic
Orman
Hans Hansen, President of Hans Racing

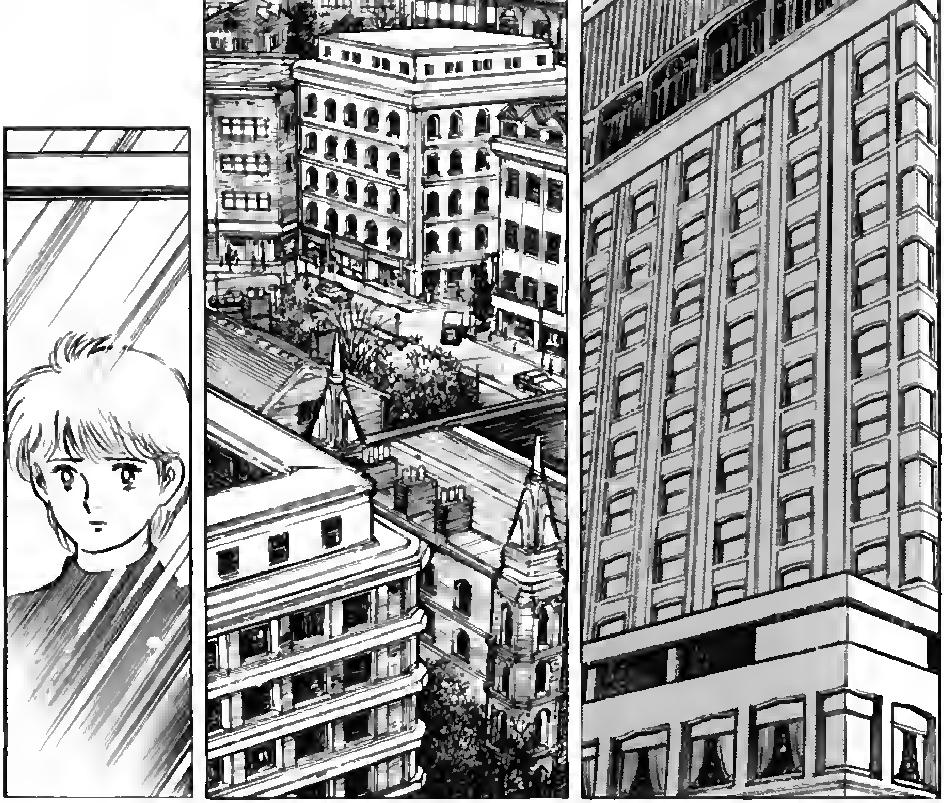

VROOH

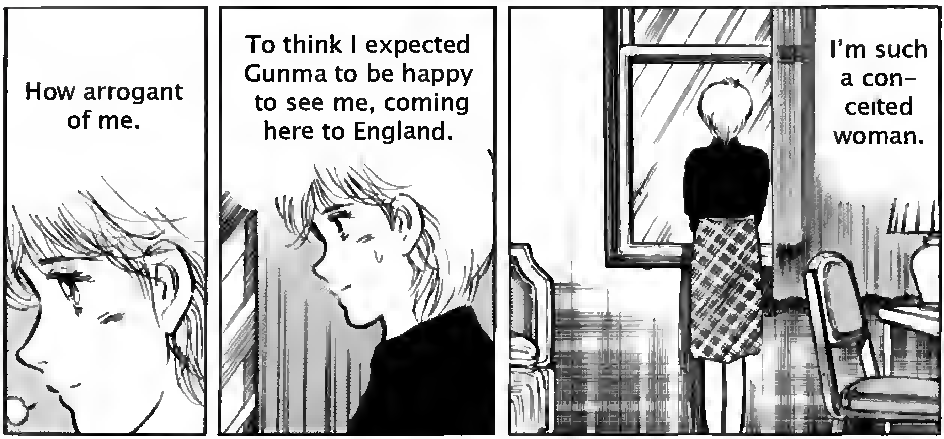
Ben Anderson, Team Manager
Michael Collins, Chief Mechanic
Larry Newman, Mechanic
Orman
Hans Hansen, President of Hans Racing

olivetti
olivetti
THUMP
Shell Oils
Shell Oils
GTA
DAVID
AAH
David Louis, Primary Driver
VRAAAA
Gunma Akagi, Second Driver

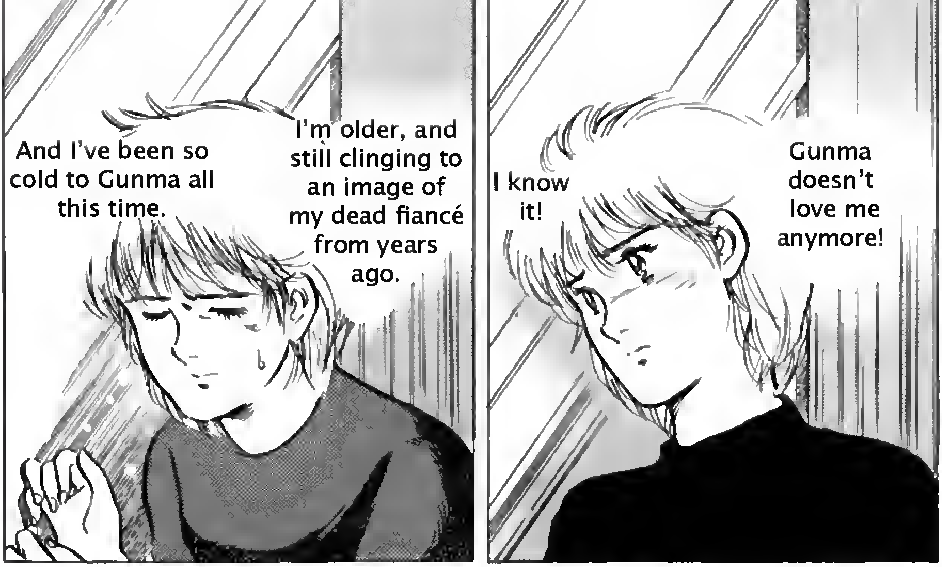

Hmph. You're quite aggressive for a Japanese bloke!
VOOOOOOM
CREAK
This damn seat don't fit me right!
CREAK
BREHHH
VROOOH

Yeah! So this is what F3000's all about!
VROOOOH
It gets easier with more power! Heh heh!
...

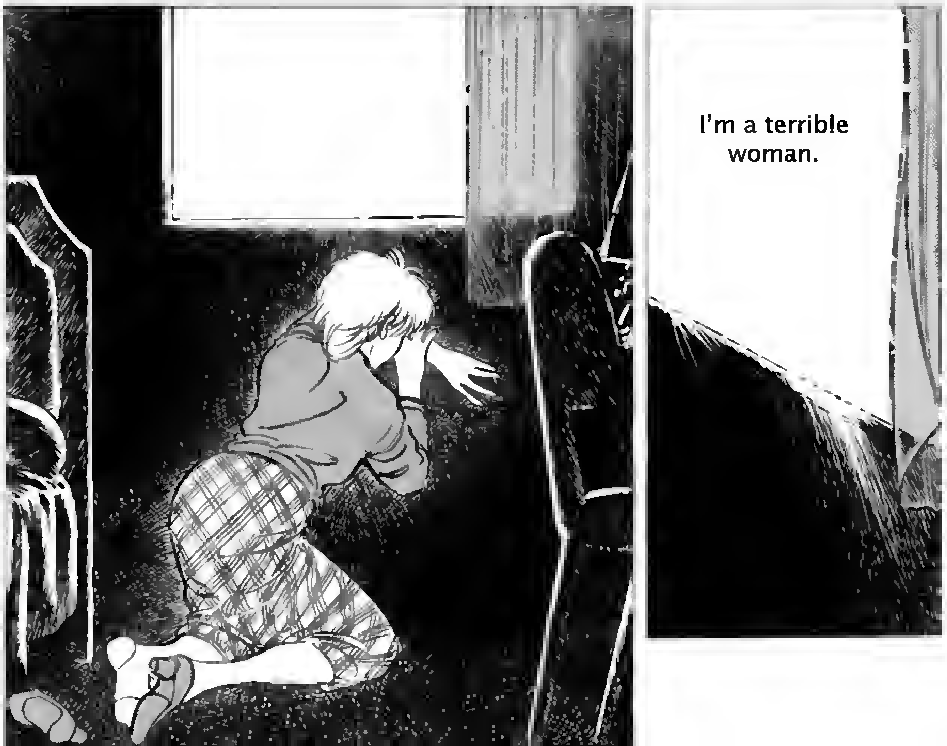


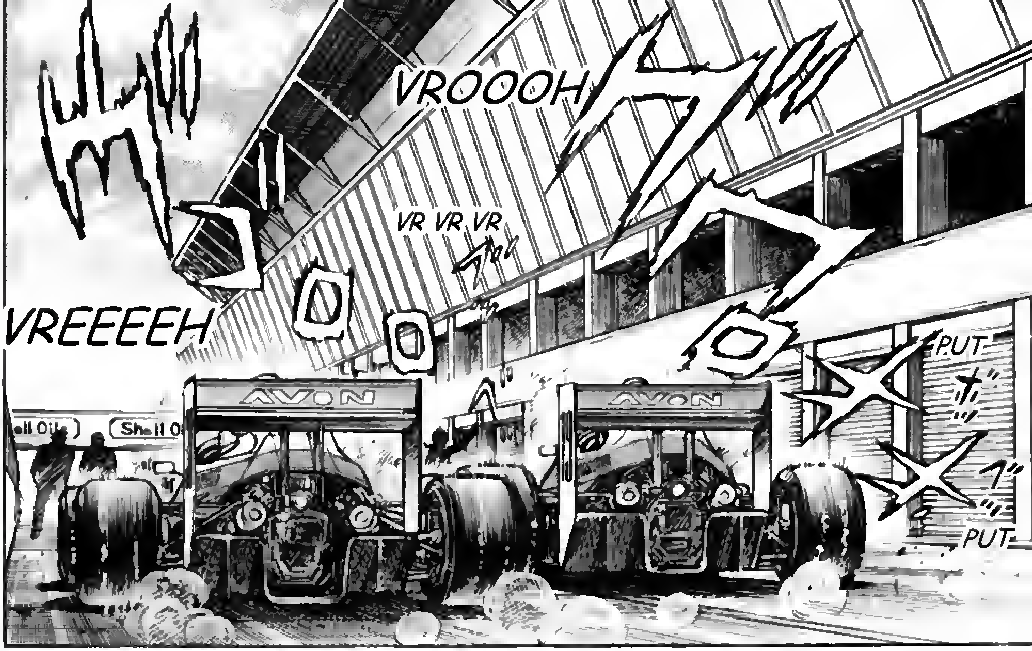

How arrogant of me.
To think I expected Gunma to be happy to see me, coming here to England.
I'm such a con-ceited woman.

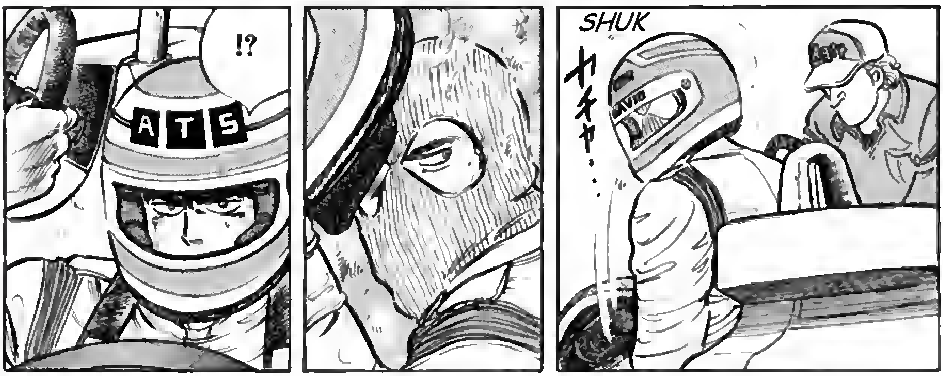
All the way to England...
Why did I even come here?

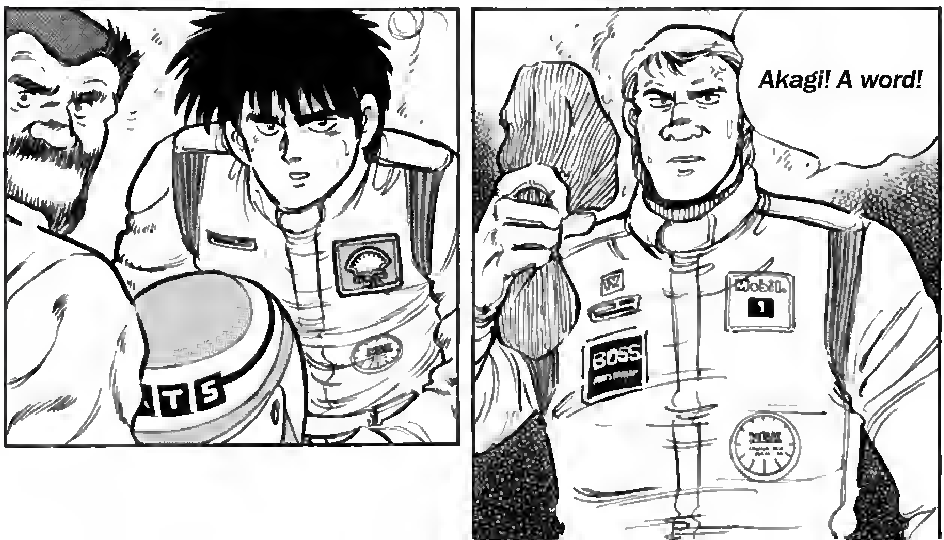

And I've been so cold to Gunma all this time.
I'm older, and still clinging to an image of my dead fiancé from years ago.
I know it!
Gunma doesn't love me anymore!

What an arrogant, selfish thing to think!
How could I possibly expect him to accept me with open arms after all I've put him through?


I'm a terrible woman.


VROOOH
VR VR VR
VREEEEH
AVON
AVON
PUT
PUT

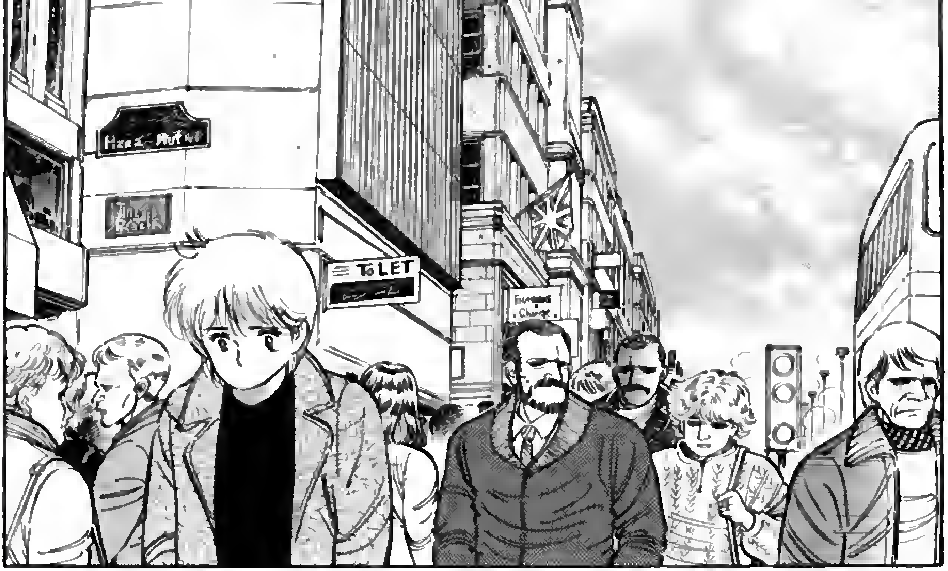

!?
ATS
SHUK

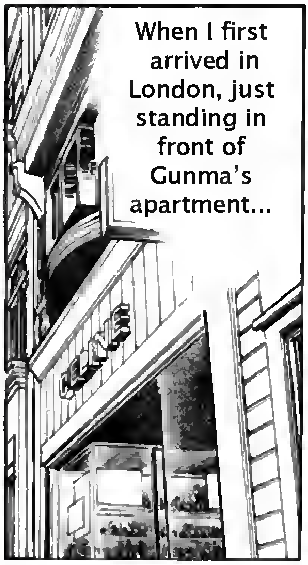

Akagi! A word!
BOSS

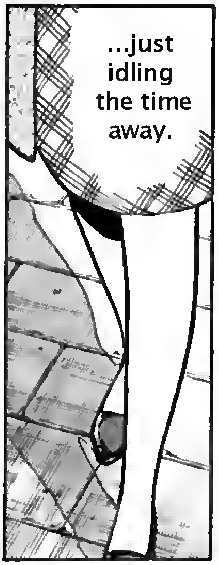
Come on now, David!
What's wrong, David? Stop this.
GRAB
I get hard myself after a good run on the track, to give a woman a good shagging.
Feels like you're no different!
What
...are
...you.
There it is. Hard as a bloody rock.

Is he some kinda queer, or what?
Right. Just like you.
PAT
Well done, Hans! Looks like you picked us a winner here! Ha ha ha!
Seems you're ready to race, Akagi.
ビリ!
RIP
No, he just paid you a compli-ment.
Learn a little English.
Maybe I am.
FWOOP
Yeah.

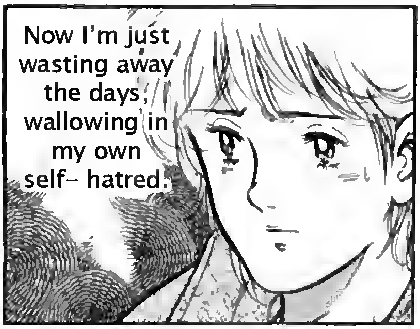
Chapter 4:
Reunited

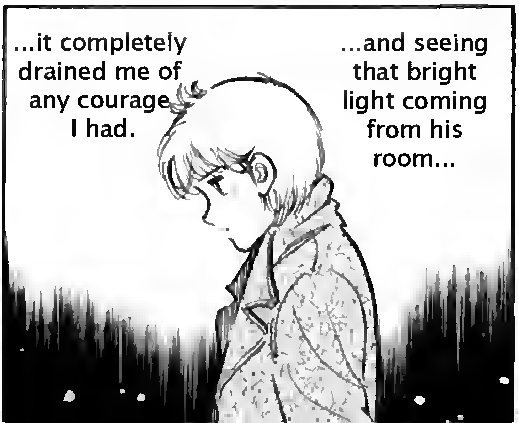

TO LET

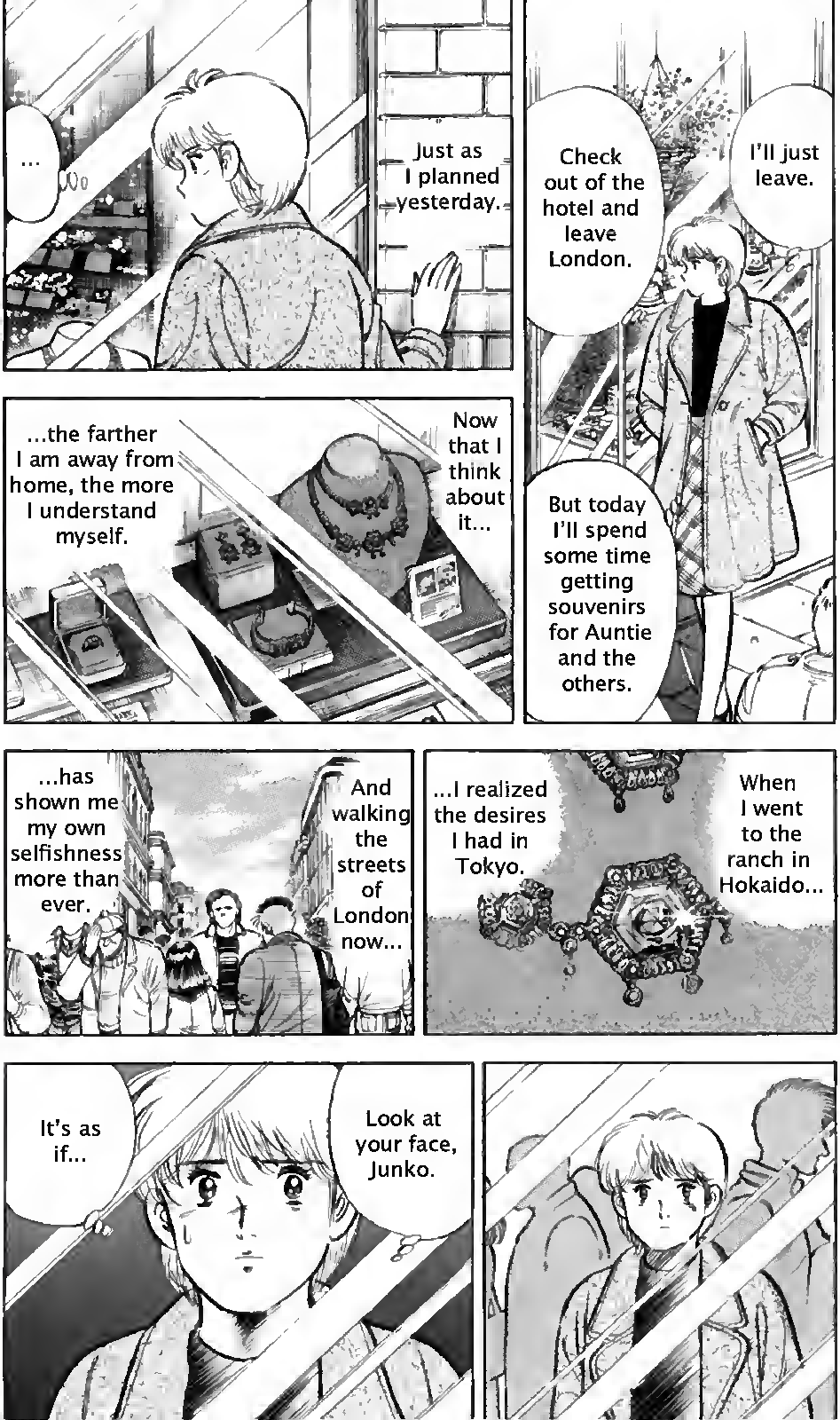

When I first arrived in London, just standing in front of Gunma's apartment...


...just idling the time away.

Walking around aimlessly...
This is my third day in England.


Now I'm just wasting away the days, wallowing in my own self- hatred.

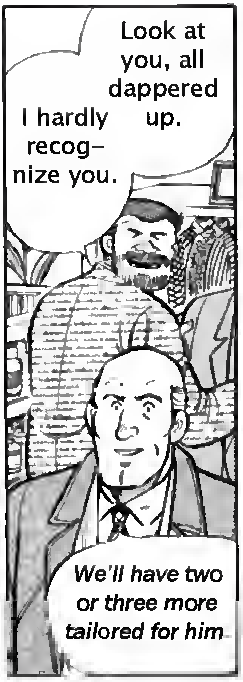

...it completely drained me of any courage I had.
...and seeing that bright light coming from his room...


...
Just as I planned yesterday.
Check out of the hotel and leave London.
I'll just leave.
...the farther I am away from home, the more I understand myself.
Now that I think about it...
But today I'll spend some time getting souvenirs for Auntie and the others.
...has shown me my own selfishness more than ever.
And walking the streets of London now...
...I realized the desires I had in Tokyo.
When I went to the ranch in Hokaido...
It's as if...
Look at your face, Junko.

Nobody gets in front of me!
And become an old woman.
...I've added decades to my life.
Huh?
It seems we poured him too much wine at lunch.
Hey, keep your voice down.
Nobody! Ha ha ha!
We get it already. Ha ha ha...
Nobody gets in front of me!
Good grief.
...

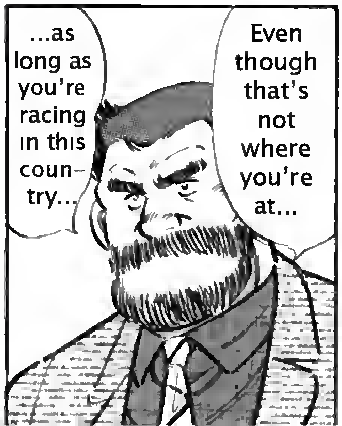
That had to be a one-in-a-million chance encounter.
I don't believe it.
...
...after coming to London, and losing my courage to meet with him?
Or was it God's way of giving me encouragement...
...and go back to Japan tomorrow.
I'll intrude on his life, just this once...
Either way, that settles it.
He'd let me see him, just this once, wouldn't he?

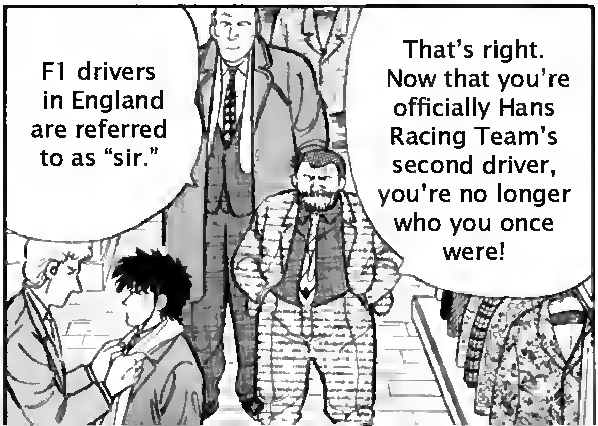
Bam!
Geez, why do I gotta wear these kinda threads?
To make a good impression for sponsors, and you'll be busy attending all sorts of parties soon.


Look at you, all dappered up. I hardly recog-nize you.
We'll have two or three more tailored for him

It's like... I ain't even myself anymore.

But it doesn't end there. You've also got to get your car tuned up, communicate with mechanics, research the cir-cuit, and so much more.
Just great... Hey, this color looks better!


...as long as you're racing in this coun-try...
Even though that's not where you're at...


F1 drivers in England are referred to as "sir."
That's right. Now that you're officially Hans Racing Team's second driver, you're no longer who you once were!

Ah
Ahh
Huff
...
It's a very high status to hold.
...you're expected to be a gentleman.
I ain't the guy I used to be!
Yeah, yeah... I know.
Are you listening, Gunma?
Not gonna happen. I don't got the brains for it!
HEH HEH HEH
Good, so now that we see eye to eye on that point, all that's left is for you to learn English.

RENTALS
...I better work hard, or he'll leave us.
Now that Gunma's driving in F3000...
kill
SHUK
Idiot!
A little late to show up now.
SHUK

Sako, we have a visitor. It's that woman I saw the other night.
カチャ
KACHUK
FLUTTER
FLUTTER
FLUTTER
...
So you're Junko.

...
At how pretty you are.
Hm?
I'm surprised.
I'm sorry to barge in like this.
Goro the photographer told me about this place, and about you.
I didn't come here to see Gunma.
No, no.
He said he's just getting his seat adjusted, and some suits made today, so it shouldn't take long.
It's perfectly fine. He should be home soon if you wait a bit.
...
...
I'll be leaving soon.
Just wanted to meet you.

As if you're my mother-in-law.
That's an odd thing to say.
I was so cold to Gunma, the whole time we were together in Japan.
So please treat him well for me.
So basically, you're giving us your blessing?
Uh-huh...
I'm sorry.
...
Aren't you!
...
You're still in love with him, aren't you.
Hmph, I get it.
THUNK
If you love him, just say it!
Not yet! I want to hear you say it!
I should be leaving now.

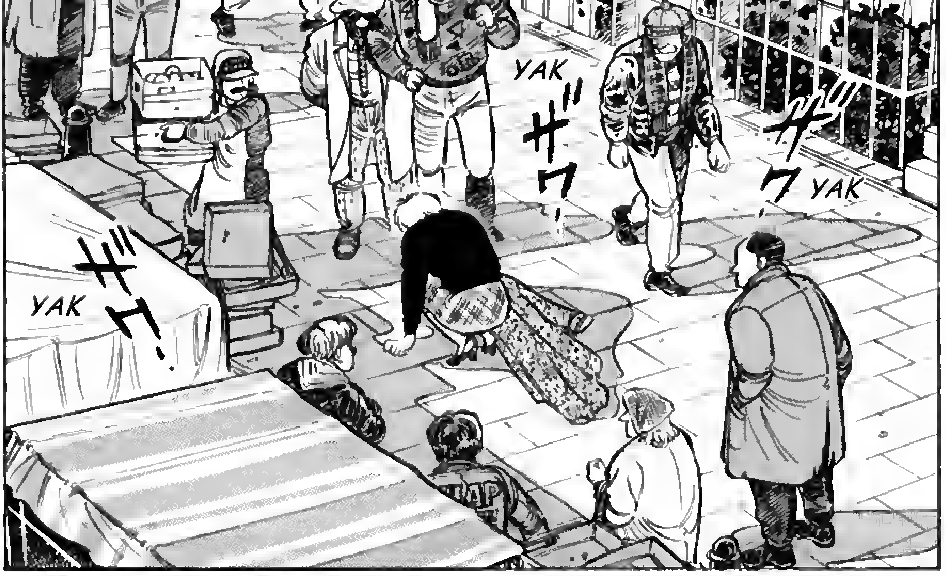
...
...too late.
It's...
...
...
That's right... It's too late.
!
Poking my nose into your business.
I'm the one who should be sorry.
...
I... I'm sorry I snapped like that, after you came all this way.

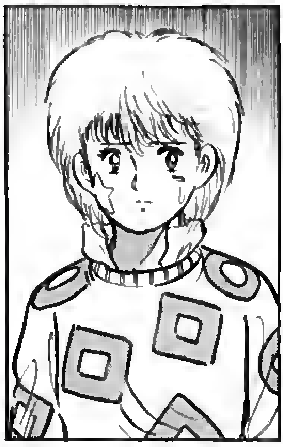
He's driving in F3000 now, for a team called Hans Racing.
Don't you wanna see him? Just for a few minutes?
Sorry to intrude.
I'm getting out of London, and never coming back.
Junko!
No, really.
...
Okay?
You should at least say hello.
KACHUK
Hey, I'm back.

Ju...
Junko...
...she just...
Gunma, um...
Get out!
I'm sorry. I didn't plan on meeting you... I just...
Why the hell would you come here?
Why'd you come?

Gun-ma!
Gu...
Get the hell out!
GRIP
Out! Out! Out!
Get outta here!
I don't wanna see you!
I was already leaving.
Let go.
I'm leaving!
Ouch... Let go.
SMACK

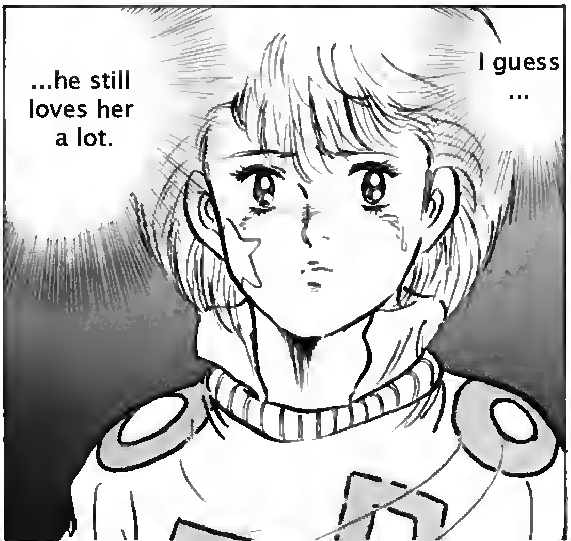
I don't wanna see you!
Unders-tand!?
Gu... Gunma...
...!
...could he...
How...
WOBBLE
WOBBLE

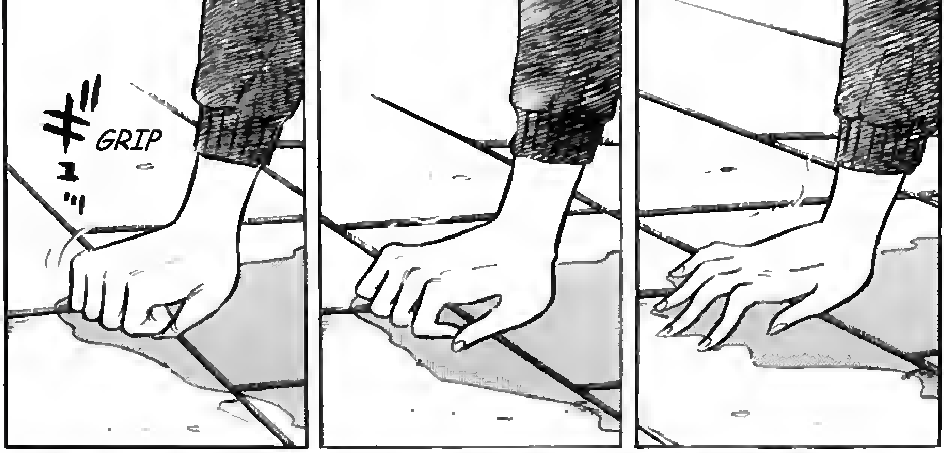

YAK
YAK
YAK

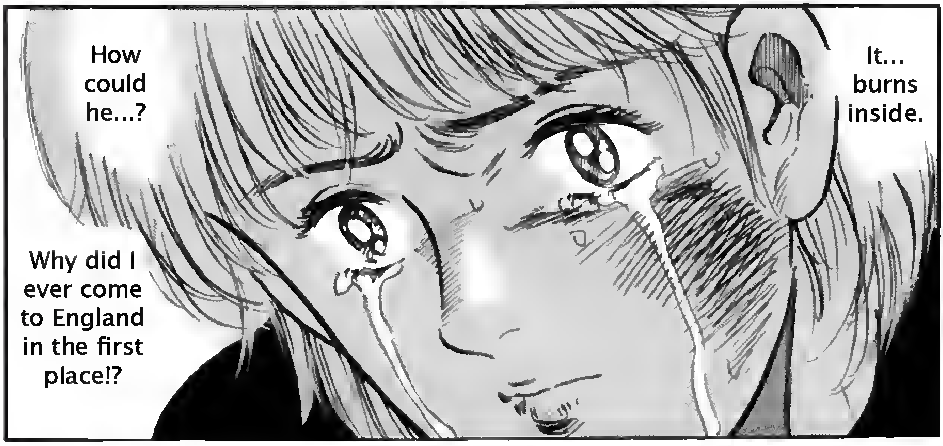


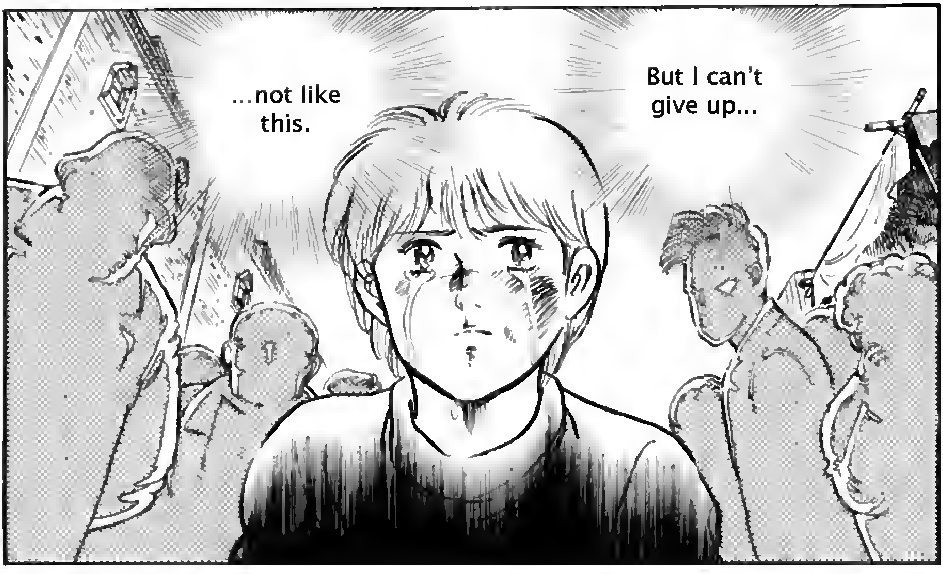
...

How could you hit a woman, Gunma? What kinda man are you?

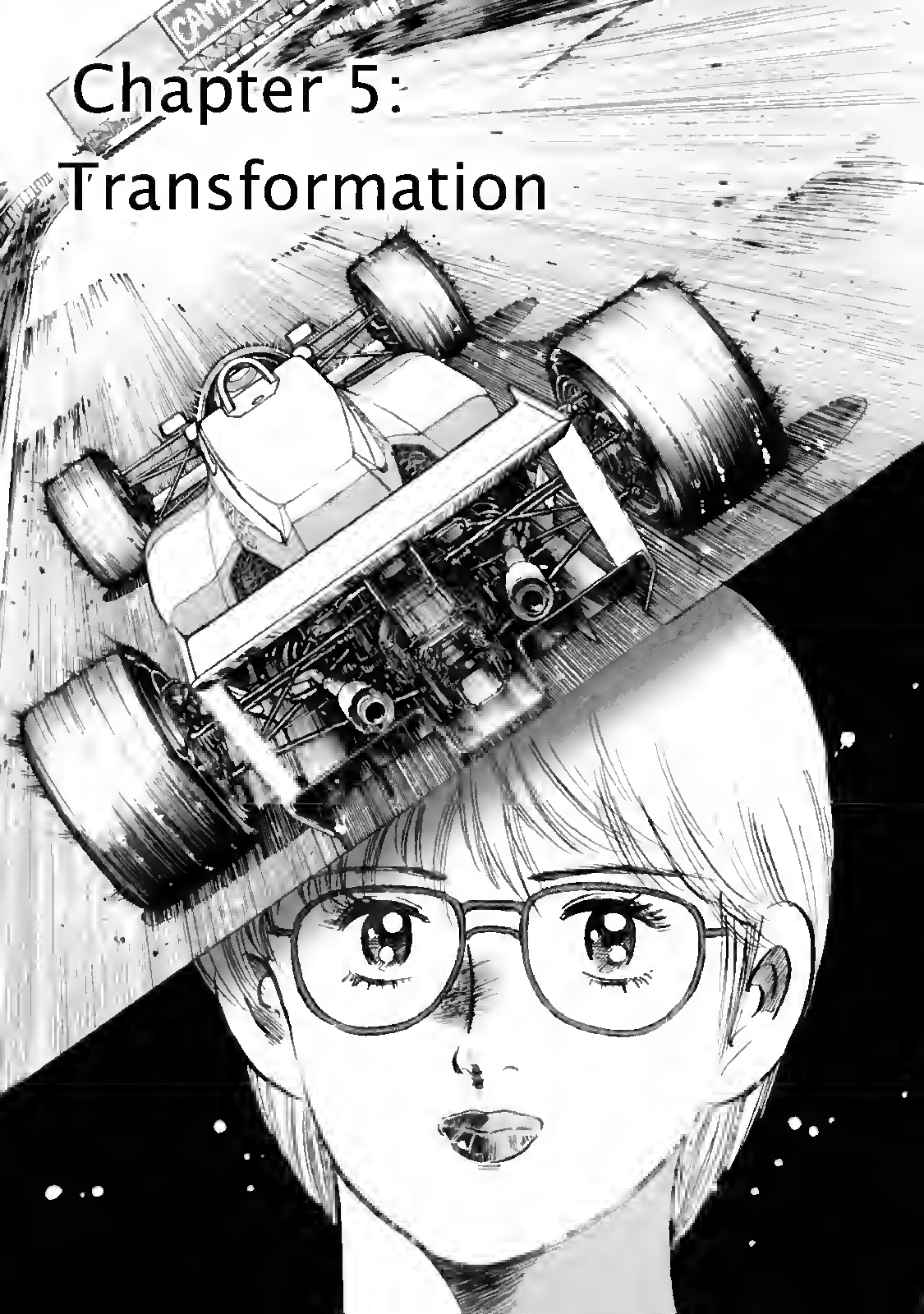

...he still loves her a lot.
I guess ...


GRIP


How could he...?
It... burns inside.
Why did I ever come to England in the first place!?


...not like this.
But I can't give up...

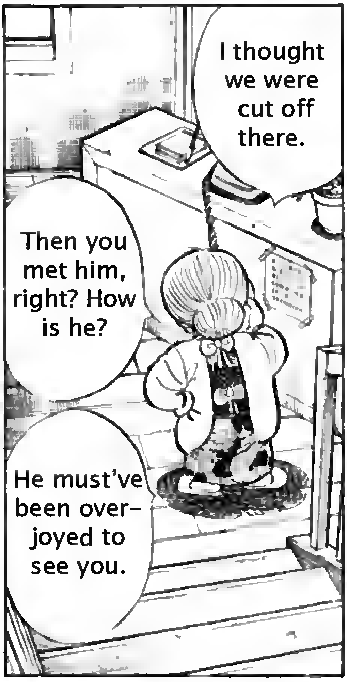
Chapter 5: Transformation

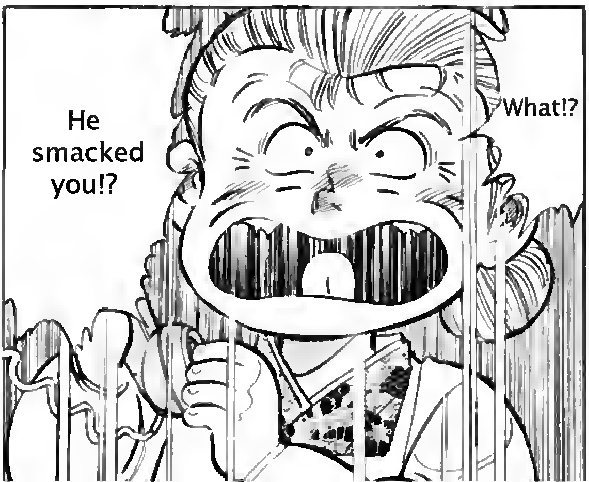


Hello? Oh, Junko.
Are you still in London? When are you coming back?
What!?
You'll be there for a while!?

I sup-pose it's okay...
Did you see Gunma?
...
Junko ... Hello?
Junko ...

Did he try to have his way with you?
I'm worried about that.

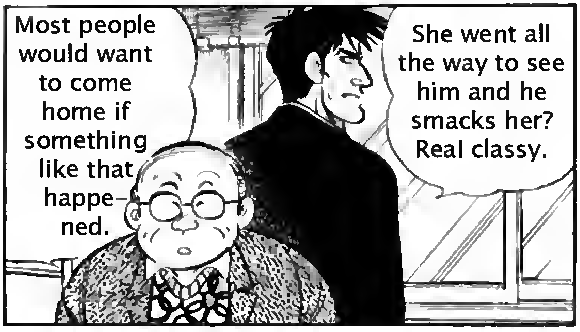

I thought we were cut off there.
Then you met him, right? How is he?
He must've been over-joyed to see you.

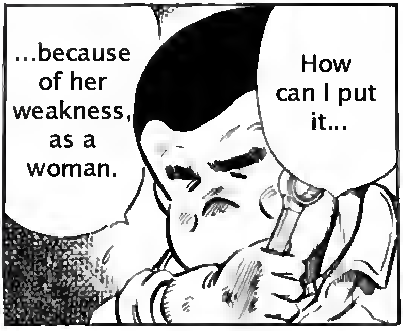

What!?
He smacked you!?

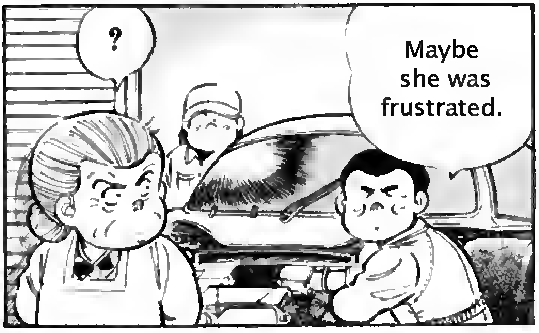
Once he hit her, she lost her desire to come back to Japan!
That's where it gets odd.
MORIOKA MOTORS

So what did Junko do?
Gunma did that?

What on earth is that girl doing?
That's what I thought.
ずず…
SLURP


Most people would want to come home if something like that happened.
She went all the way to see him and he smacks her? Real classy.


…because of her weakness, as a woman.
How can I put it...


?
Maybe she was frustrated.

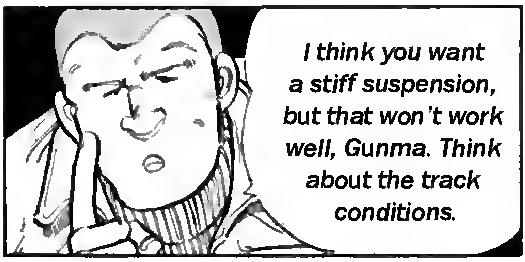
TUK
TUK
TUK
TUK
TUK
TUK

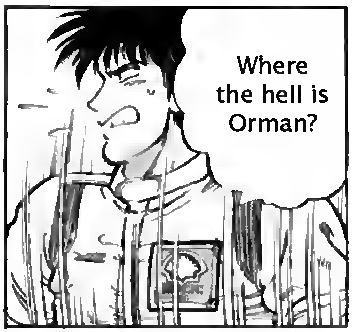
KACHUK
Hmm ...
Her weakness as a woman ...
KACHIK
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
She didn't know what to do... ...but eventually decided to go see him!
...how much she loves Gunma.
Once they were apart, Junko realized for the first time...
ZOOM
VRRR
VROOH
RYU
I love you, Junko.
PIP
KASHUNK
EJECT
But how could he hit her?
A woman wants to be with the man she loves. That soft spot, I suppose it is a weakness.
Maybe that was unnecessary.

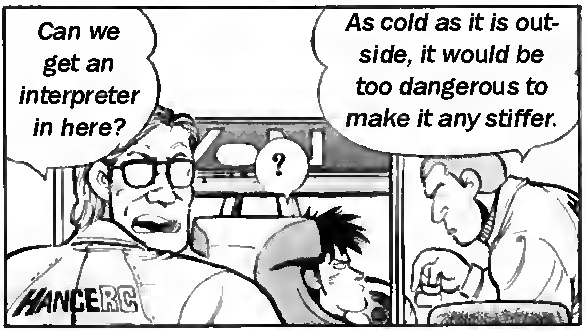
And that worries me so.
I don't have a clue what either of them are thinking.
RYU
PIP
Tell me your take on this.
What do you think, Ryuji?
愛情占い
SPIN
MEOW
CLICK
What'll become of those two?
KUCHAK
SHUK
愛情占い
前途多難
Love Fortune
Many difficulties lie ahead.

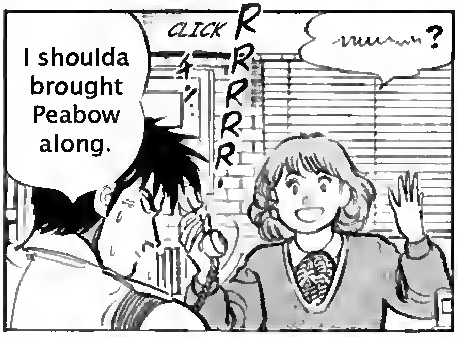
You don't understand a word I'm sayin', do ya...

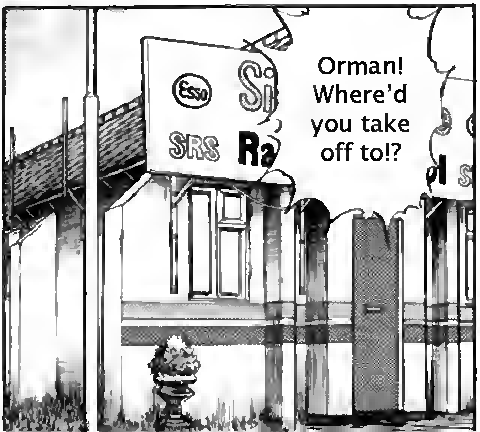
The suspension's too soft.
See how it's all mushy?
I like it nice and stiff! Got it?
A nice stiff suspension! Okay?


I think you want a stiff suspension, but that won't work well, Gunma. Think about the track conditions.


Where the hell is Orman?


Can we get an interpreter in here?
As cold as it is outside, it would be too dangerous to make it any stiffer.
?


I shoulda brought Peabow along.
CLICK
R
R
R
R
?

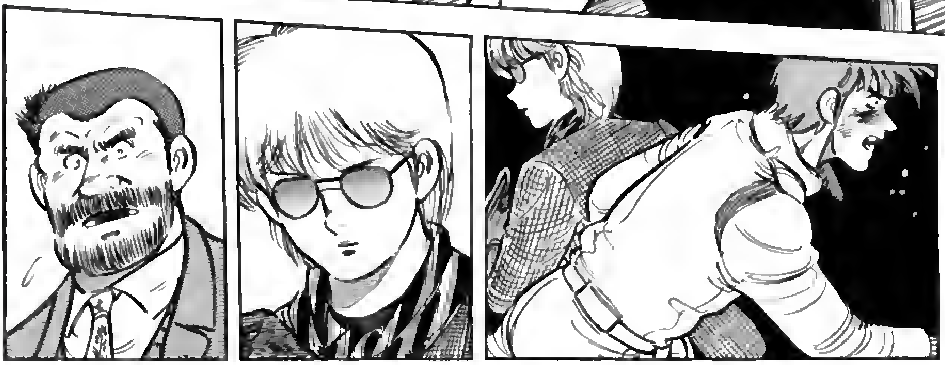

Orman! Where'd you take off to!?
Esso
SRS
R2

Orman! Where the hell did you go!?
?
Mr. Orman!
Mr. Akagi! Mr. Orman's on the line for you!
Silver Stone
So I found you a great interpreter, Gunma!
I had a feeling this would happen.
Make 'em learn Japanese!
These mechanics are rattlin' away at me in English and I can't figure out what they're tryin' to say!
I just finished the interview, so we'll be right over.
IRK
KACHUK
Shell Oils
Inter-preter ...
...

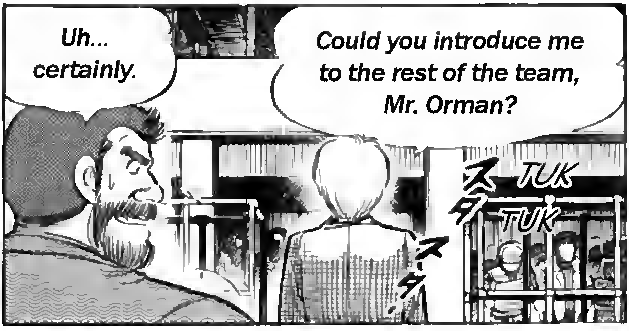
SHEEN
SLAM
TUK
TUK
TUK
Junko ...!?
Ju...

...
It couldn't have worked out better. She just called our office today asking if we need someone to do this.
Let me introduce you to Ms. Junko Komori. She'll be working as your interpreter.
Aren't you gonna shake her hand? Don't be rude.
Good afternoon, Mr. Akagi.
FWOOSH
What the hell do you think you're ...!?
You...!
...

SLAP

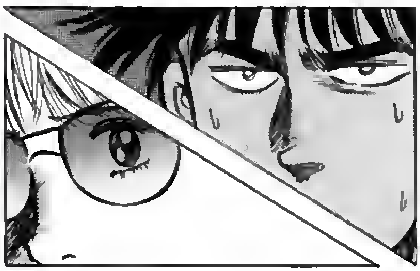


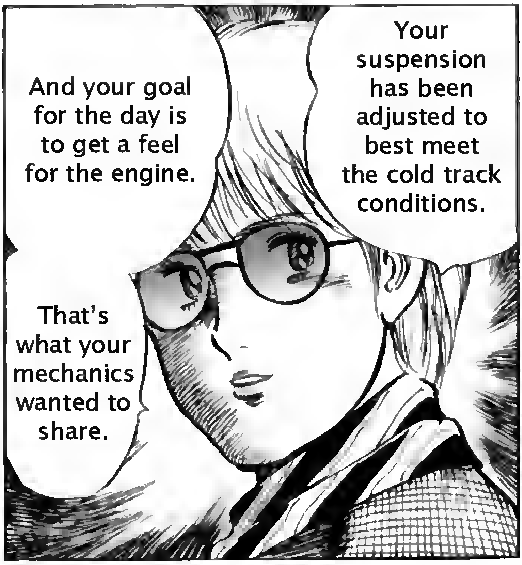
...


Uh... certainly.
Could you introduce me to the rest of the team, Mr. Orman?
TUK TUK

...
HAHAHA.

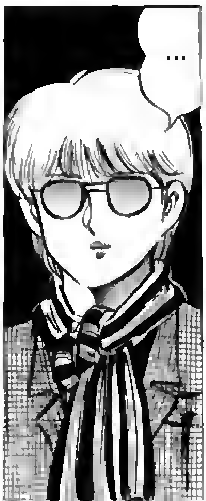
Now you better start prac-ticing.



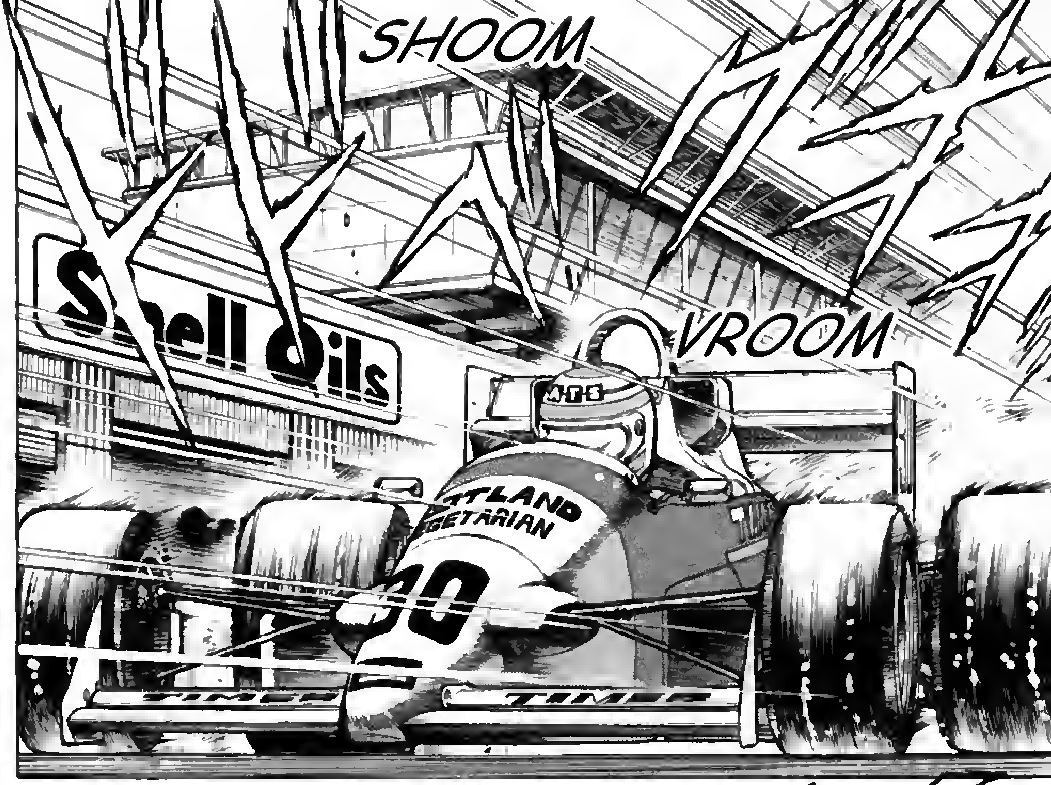

Your suspension has been adjusted to best meet the cold track conditions.
And your goal for the day is to get a feel for the engine.
That's what your mechanics wanted to share.

THANK YOU。

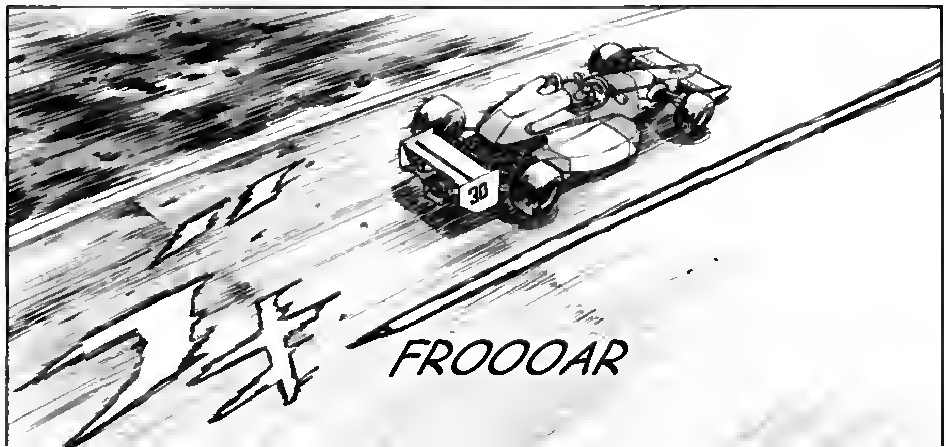
And it's pretty damn good.
ATS

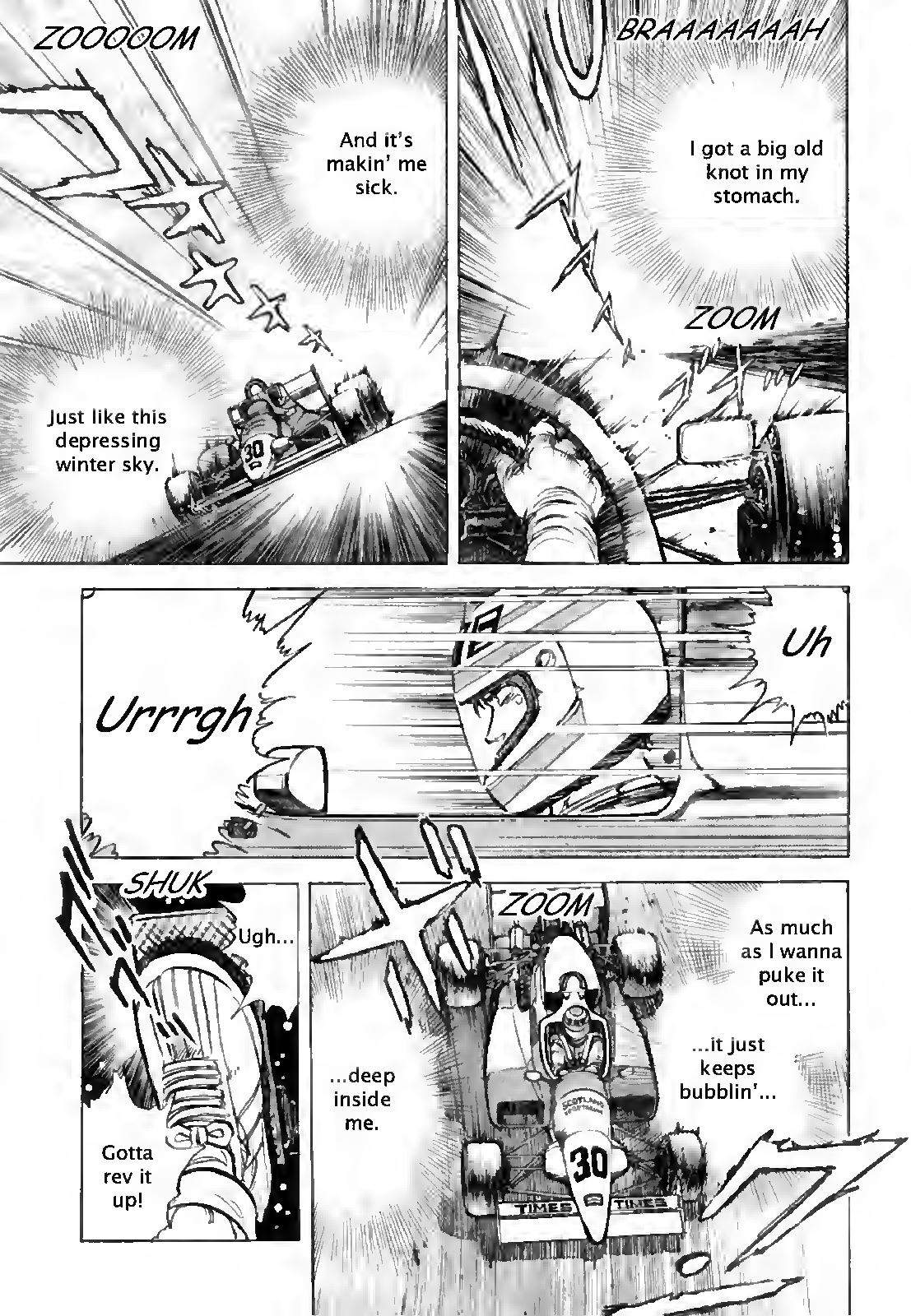

...

Heh... I never knew you could speak English, Junko.
ATS


SHOOM
VROOM
Shell Oils
TTLAND
GETARIAN
30

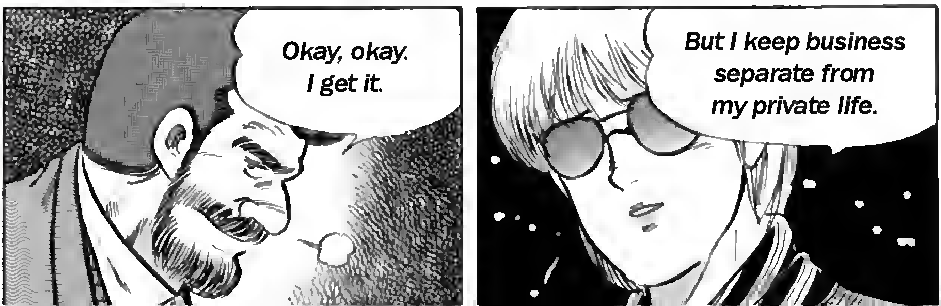
VROOOM

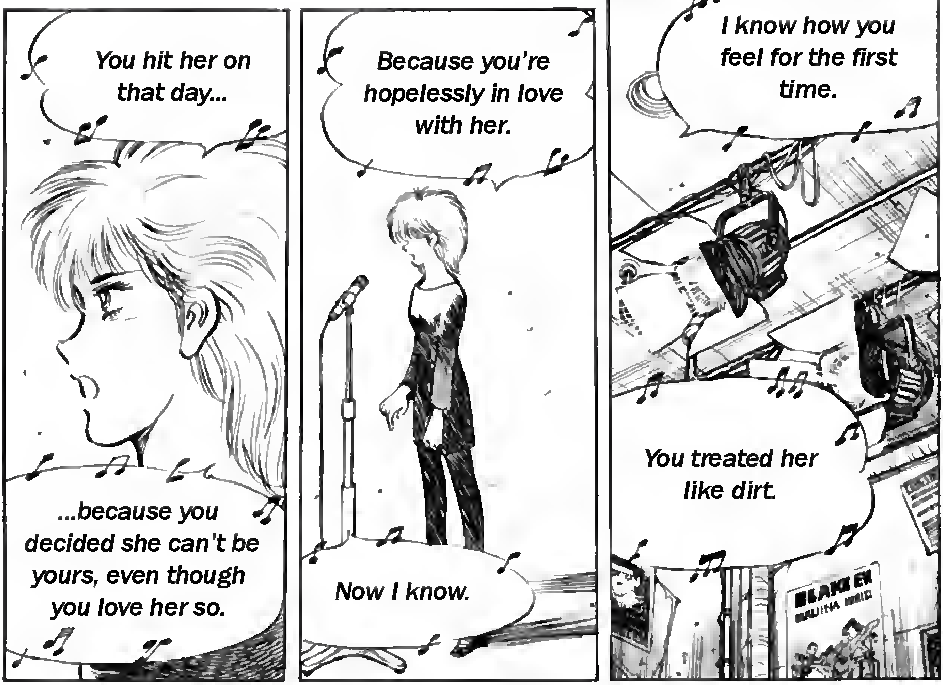

30
FROOOAR

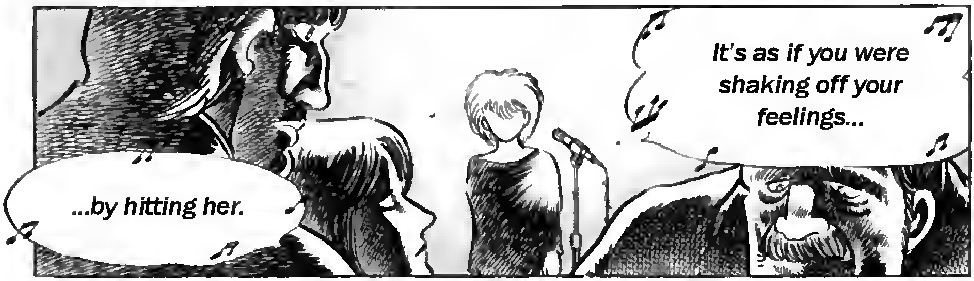

ZOOOOOM
And it's makin' me sick.
Just like this depressing winter sky.
BRAAAAAAAH
I got a big old knot in my stomach.
ZOOM
Urrrgh
Uh
SHUK
Ugh...
Gotta rev it up!
ZOOM
...deep inside me.
As much as I wanna puke it out...
...it just keeps bubblin'...
30
TIMES
TIMES

VROOOOH
I wish the season would start already!
SCOTLAND
VEGETARIAN
30
TIMES
TIMES

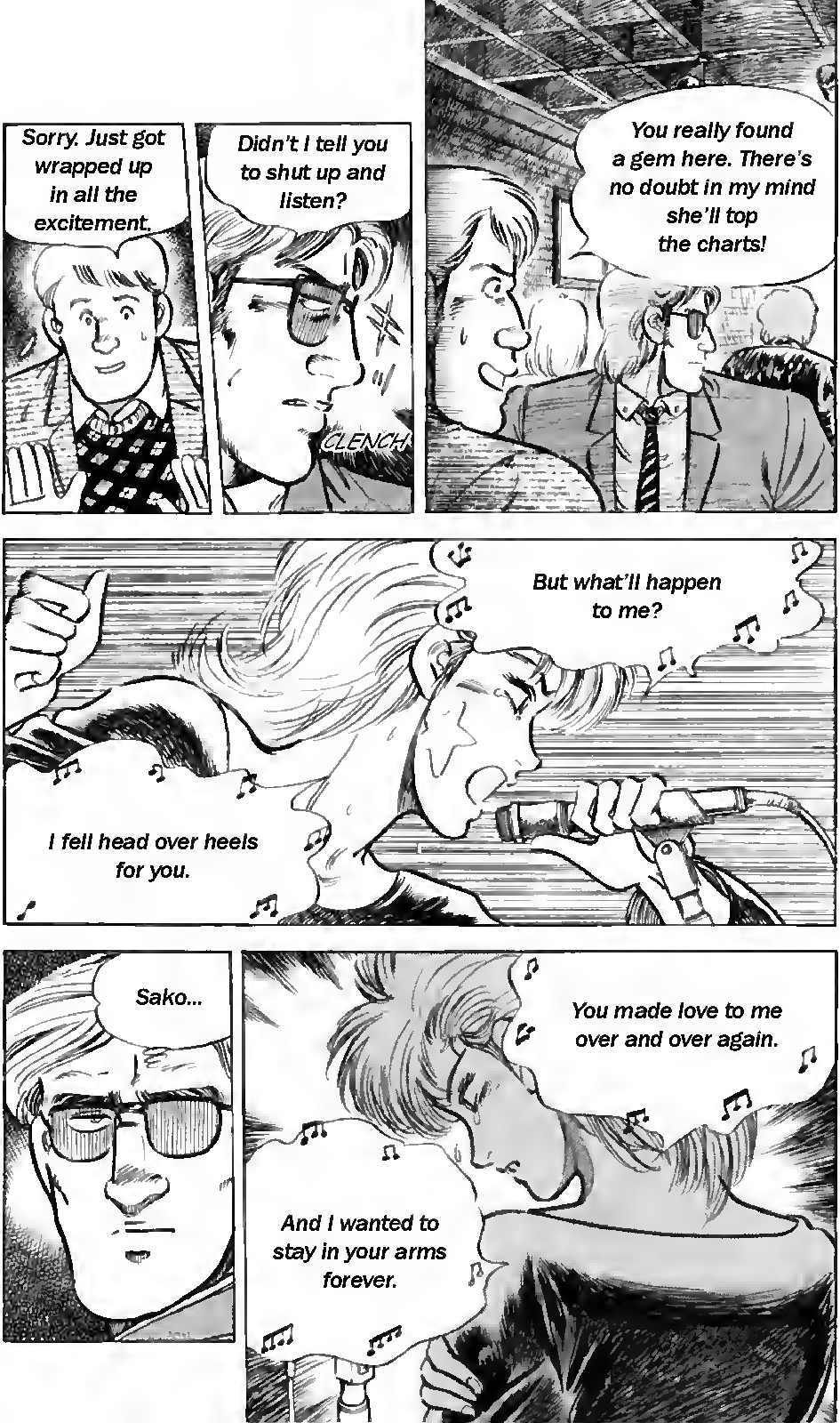
I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hide anything from you.
So you already know Gunma.
HAH

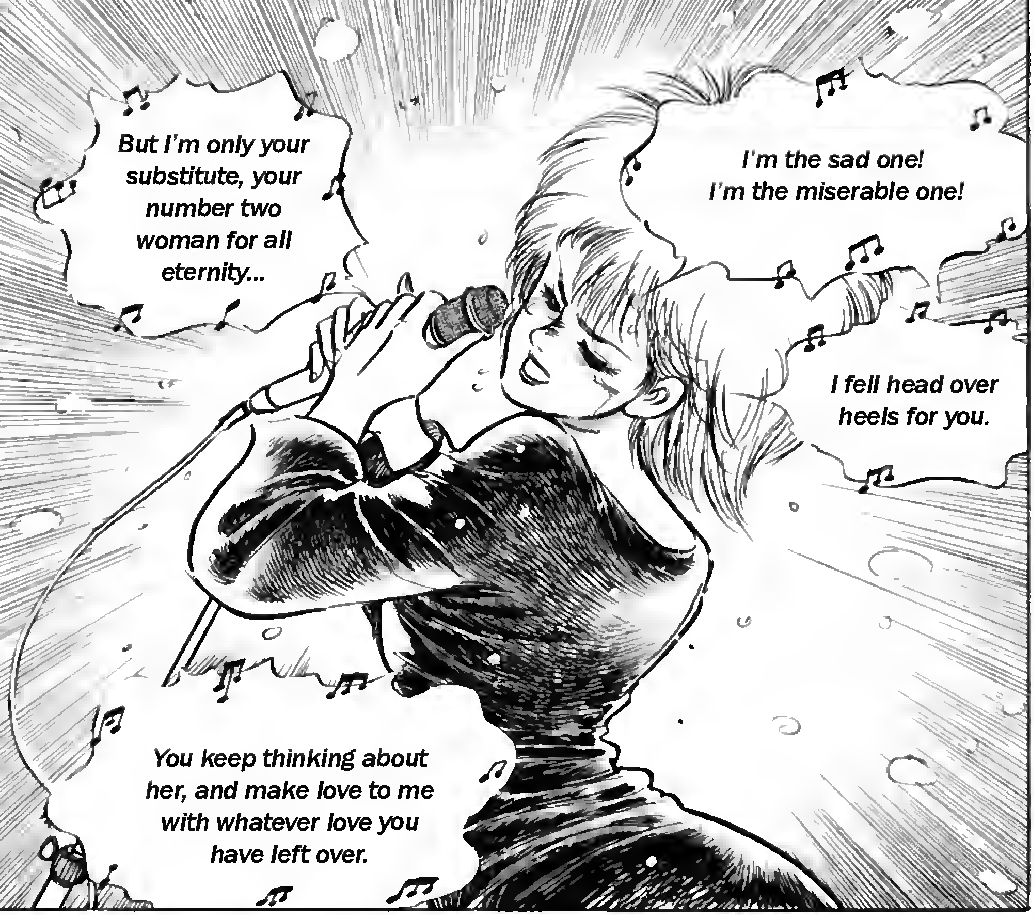

Okay, okay. I get it.
But I keep business separate from my private life.


You hit her on that day...
...because you decided she can't be yours, even though you love her so.
Because you're hopelessly in love with her.
Now I know.
I know how you feel for the first time.
You treated her like dirt.
BLAKEN

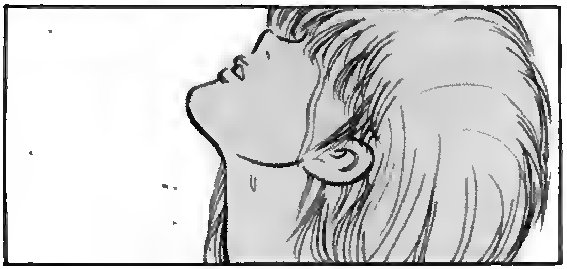

It's as if you were shaking off your feelings...
...by hitting her.

She's really something, George.
Shut up and listen.
It's a sad, sad love song.


Sorry. Just got wrapped up in all the excitement.
Didn't I tell you to shut up and listen?
CLENCH!
You really found a gem here. There's no doubt in my mind she'll top the charts!
But what'll happen to me?
I fell head over heels for you.
Sako...
You made love to me over and over again.
And I wanted to stay in your arms forever.


But I'm only your substitute, your number two woman for all eternity...
I'm the sad one! I'm the miserable one!
I fell head over heels for you.
You keep thinking about her, and make love to me with whatever love you have left over.

HUSHHH

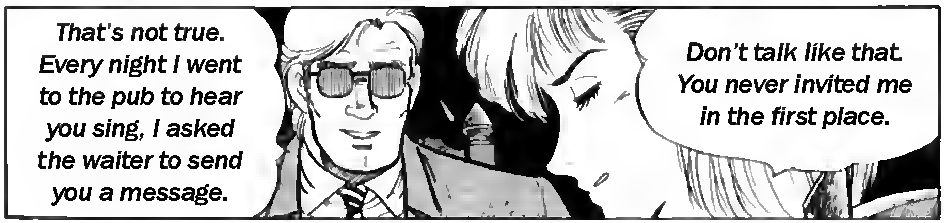


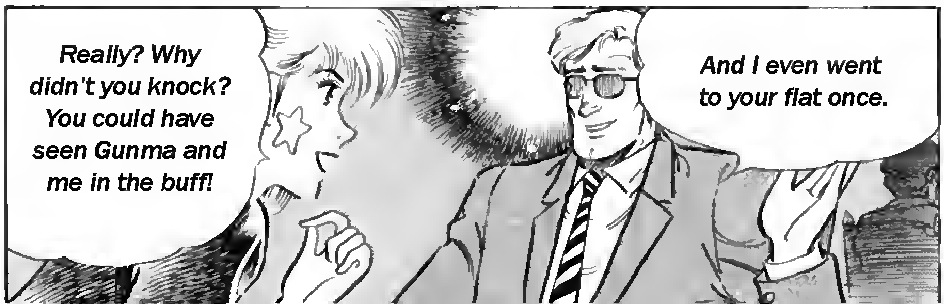
Who should I sing this sad love song for?

CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
Geor–
ge...
...
...
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
She signs the contract with me. Don't let anyone else in on this. Got it?
You're the man, George.
WOOHOO
WOOHOO
You've moved us to tears, Sako. We love you.

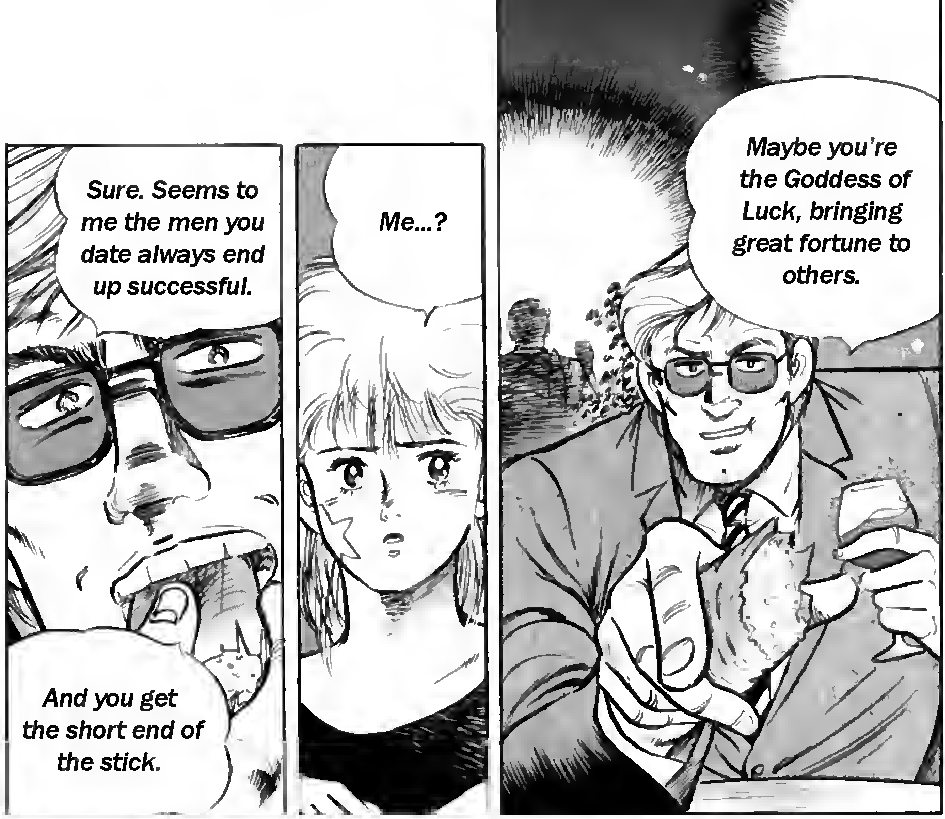
Chapter 6:
Goddess of Luck
RAYMOND
NEMA
NEMA
NIGHT-C
& BA
LEGS
DIAMOND
ER
DOC
DNS

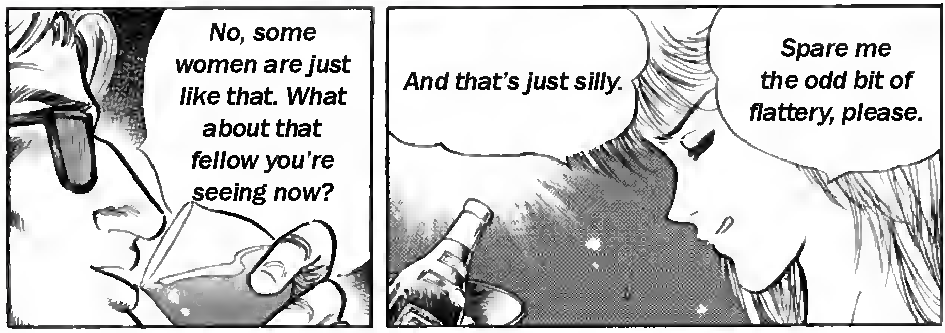
...
So you finally met with me.

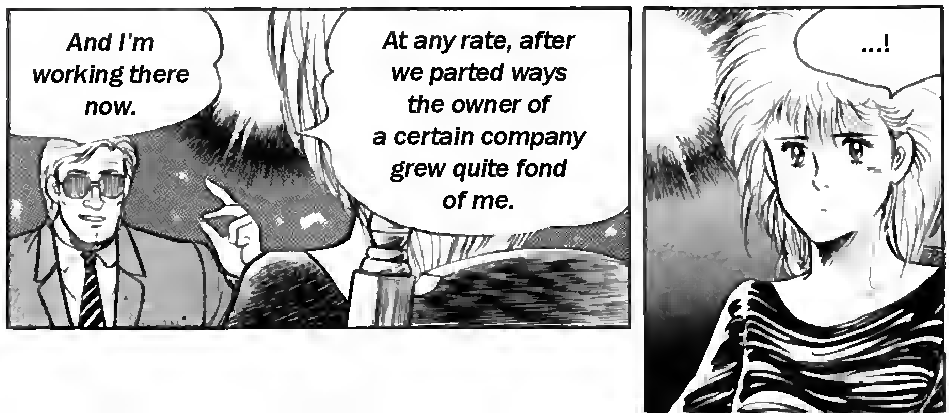

That's not true. Every night I went to the pub to hear you sing, I asked the waiter to send you a message.
Don't talk like that. You never invited me in the first place.

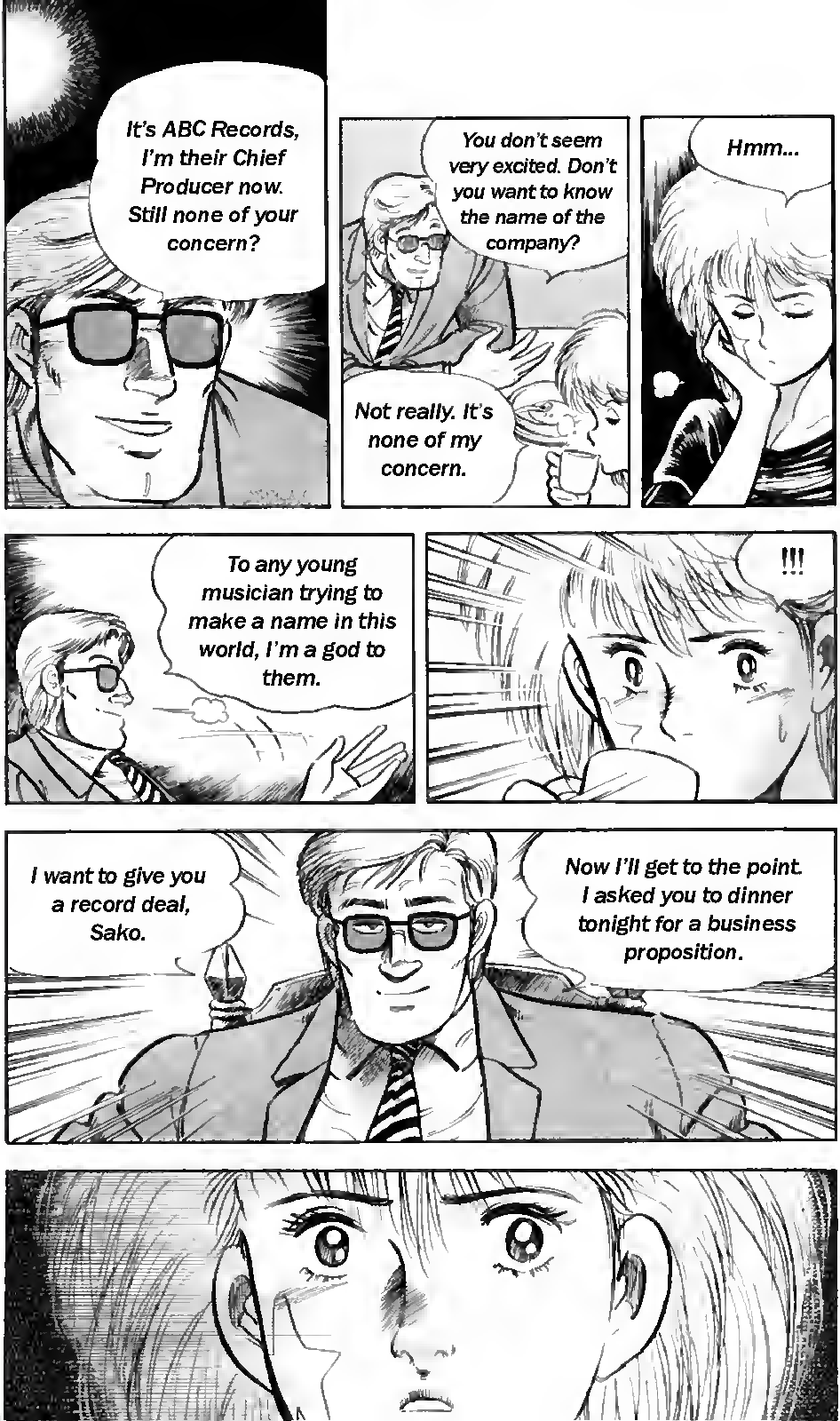

Really? Why didn't you knock? You could have seen Gunma and me in the buff!
And I even went to your flat once.

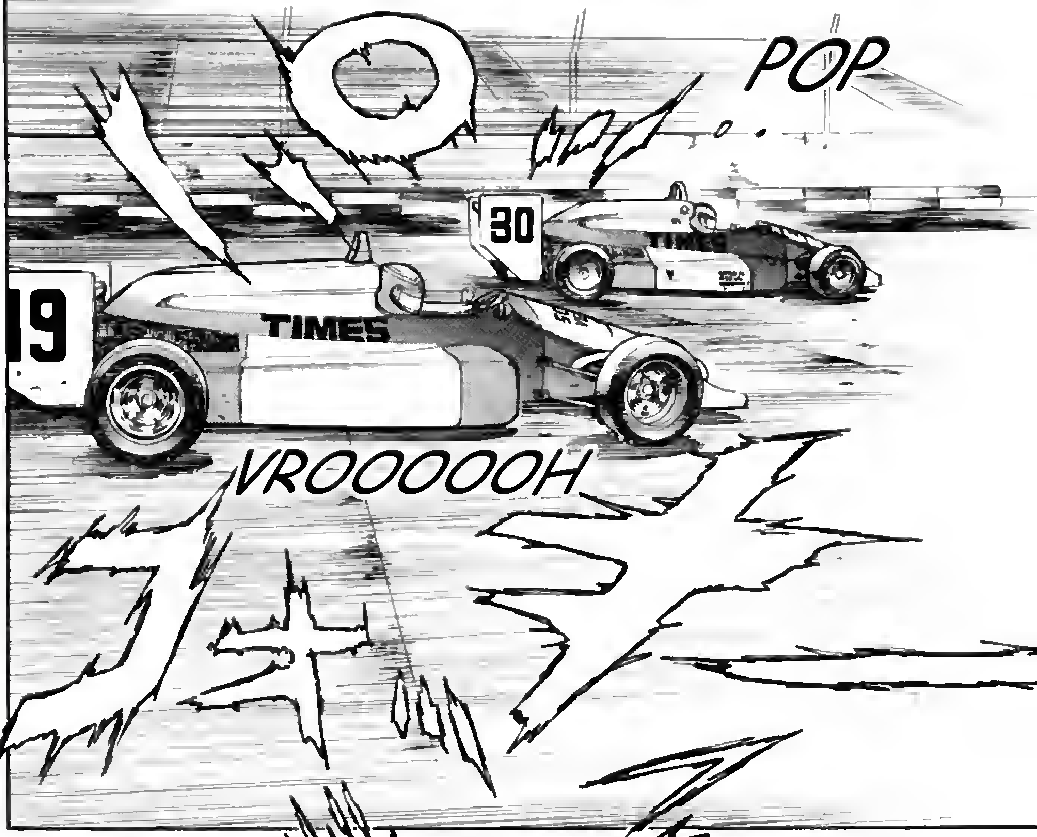
Hmph.
That's what I was afraid of, but I had so much to tell you.
I just couldn't muster the courage to knock at your door.
I only came for the meal. Nothing more.
Come on now, don't look at me like that. Now that we're together like this, let's enjoy the night.
But you know that...
CHING
Of course.
You said it, and I don't understand how I came across such remarkable luck.
You seem to be doing quite well for yourself. A world of difference from the old you.


Sure. Seems to me the men you date always end up successful.
And you get the short end of the stick.
Me...?
Maybe you're the Goddess of Luck, bringing great fortune to others.


No, some women are just like that. What about that fellow you're seeing now?
And that's just silly.
Spare me the odd bit of flattery, please.

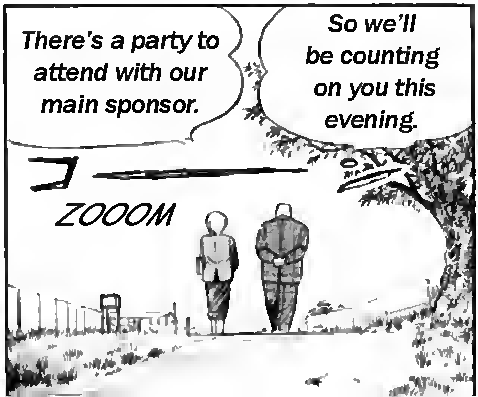

And I'm working there now.
At any rate, after we parted ways the owner of a certain company grew quite fond of me.
...!


It's ABC Records, I'm their Chief Producer now. Still none of your concern?
You don't seem very excited. Don't you want to know the name of the company?
Not really. It's none of my concern.
Hmm...
To any young musician trying to make a name in this world, I'm a god to them.
!!!
I want to give you a record deal, Sako.
Now I'll get to the point. I asked you to dinner tonight for a business proposition.


POP
30
19
TIMES
VROOOOOH

And Gunma hasn't the slightest desire to learn English. Ha ha ha.
We're fortunate to have you on board.
Orman is a friend of mine, but he's not part of the team, so I can't always depend on him.
ZOOOM
VOOOOH

We'll be announcing the new color of our car.

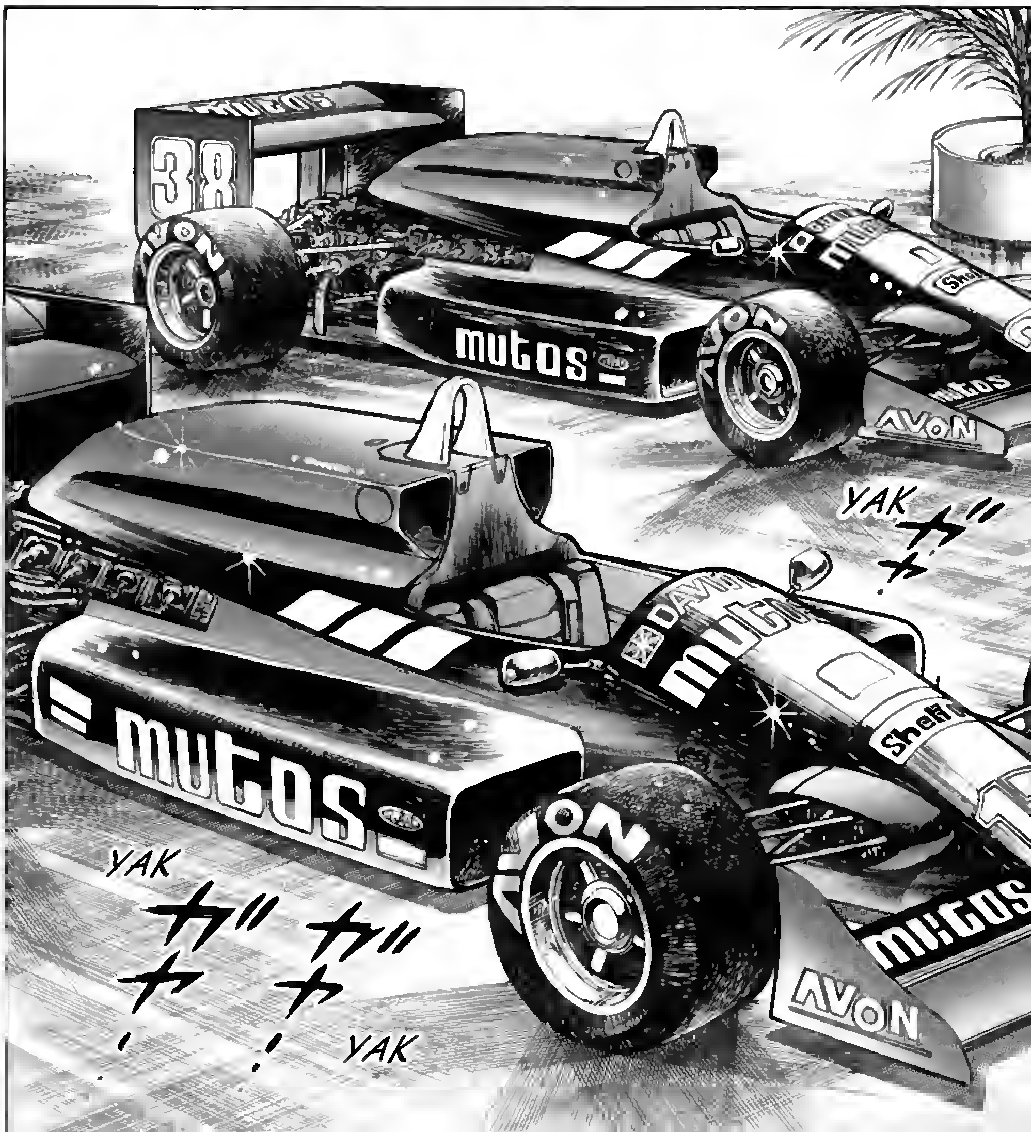

There's a party to attend with our main sponsor.
So we'll be counting on you this evening.
ZOOOM

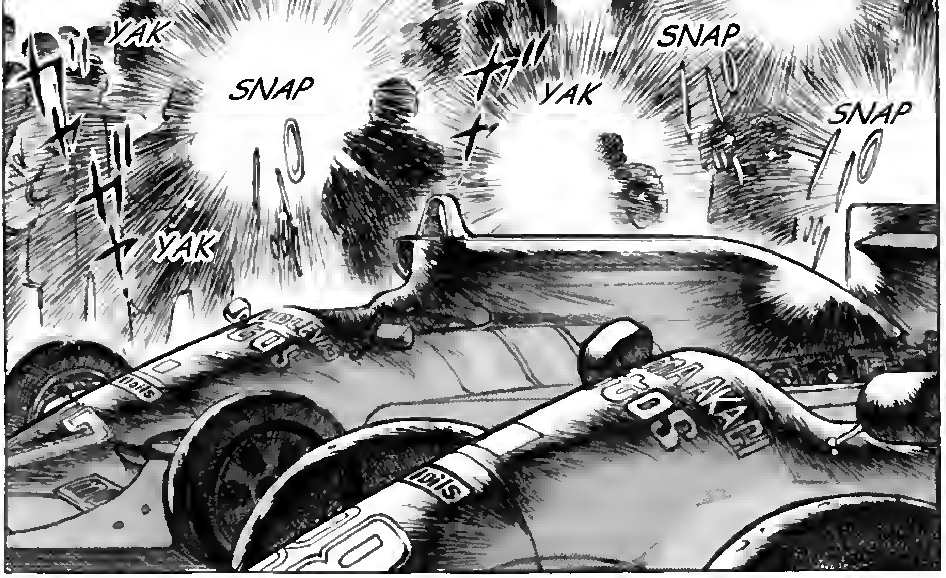
GRIN
What are you planning to do with him!?
Huh!?
I heard you're translating for Gunma now!
That's not it at all.
Don't be silly.
Steal him away from Sako!?
What are you ramb-lin' about?
And not only you! I'll kill anybody who hurts Sako!
You better not be lying to me!
Because if you are, I'll kill you!

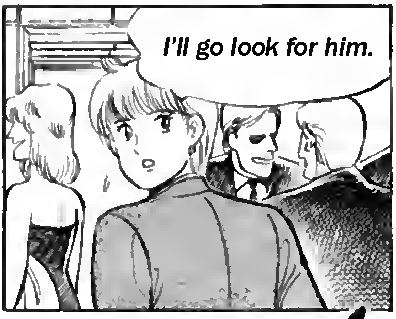
Hey, Peabow. What are you so worked up about?
FWOOP
Whoa!
Ted was aggressive as hell out there.
Gunma ...
What a dangerous little varmint you are.
If you do anything to hurt Sako, I'll kill you!
Listen to me, Gunma!
And tell Hans I'll be coming with a woman and a kid!
Oh yeah, don't worry about it. I'll dress the part.
Gunma, about tonight's party...
Just relax,little man!

Peabow! You, me, and Sako are goin' to a party tonight.
Sure... I'll let him know.
Yay!
With all the food you can eat!
SWOOF
Dum dah dum...
FWOOH
...
Ha ha ha ha! Gotcha little man!
That hurt, Gunma! You dirty traitor!
19
HA HA HA HA

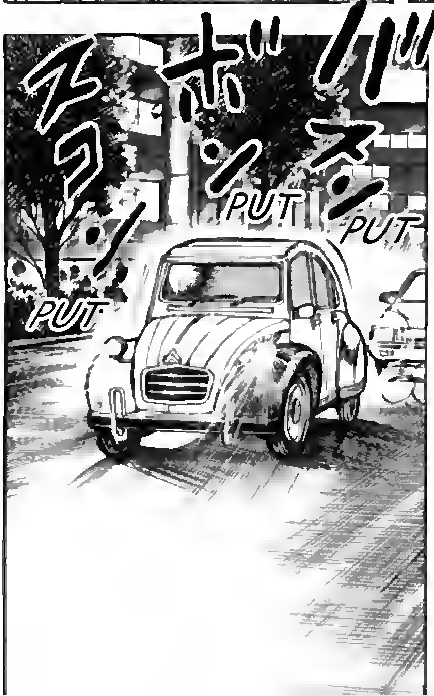
SPACE HOTEL

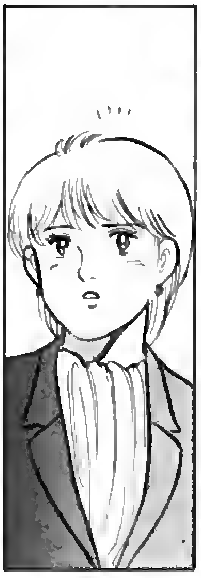

38
mutos
AVON
YAK
YAK
YAK


YAK
SNAP
YAK
SNAP
YAK
SNAP
03
03


I'll go look for him.

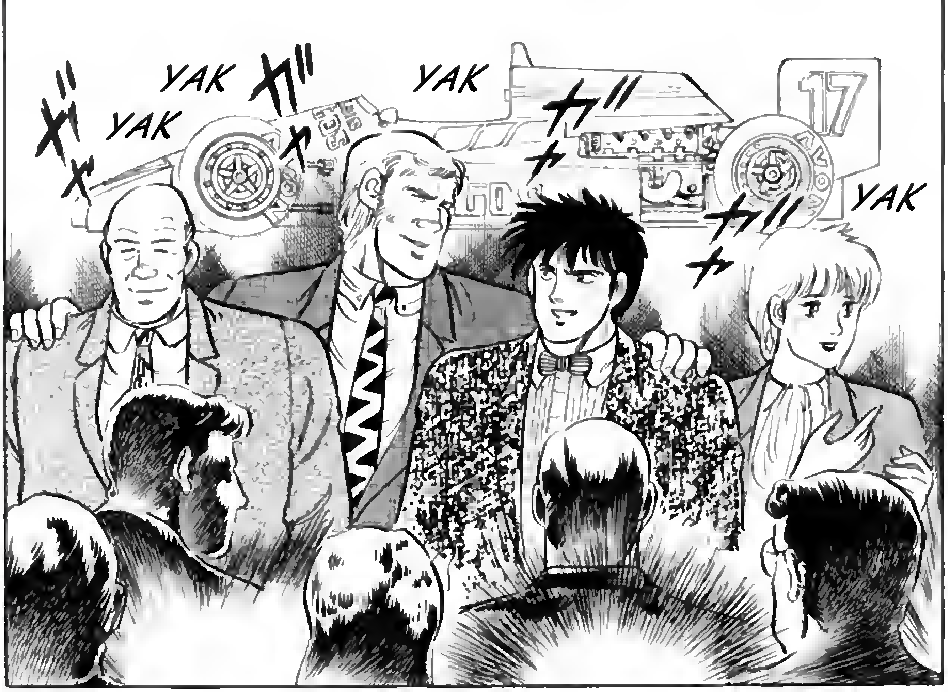
Gunma's late... We need him for the press conference.

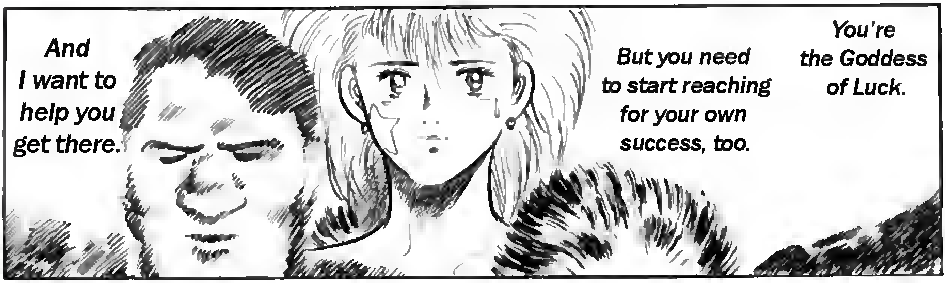

PUT
PUT
PUT



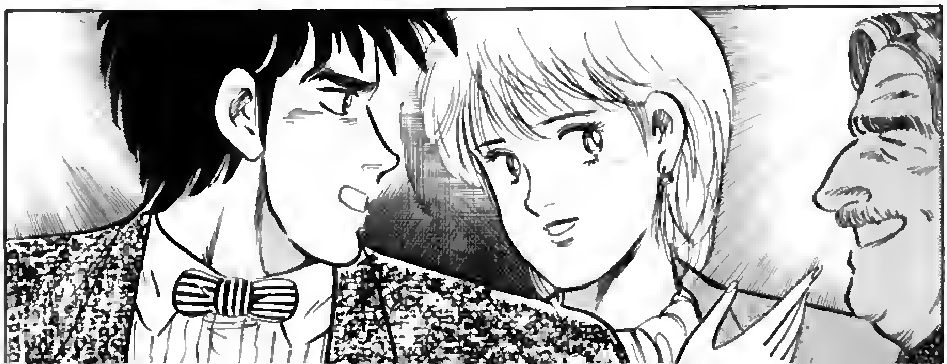
SLAM
SLAM
You're late, Gunma. Hurry.
Ugh ...
Yup, yup! I'm comin'!
ひょい
STOMP
ひょい
STOMP

Wait, Gunma!
!
PLUNK
Right, no crazy...
Don't get crazy. A gentleman stays calm.

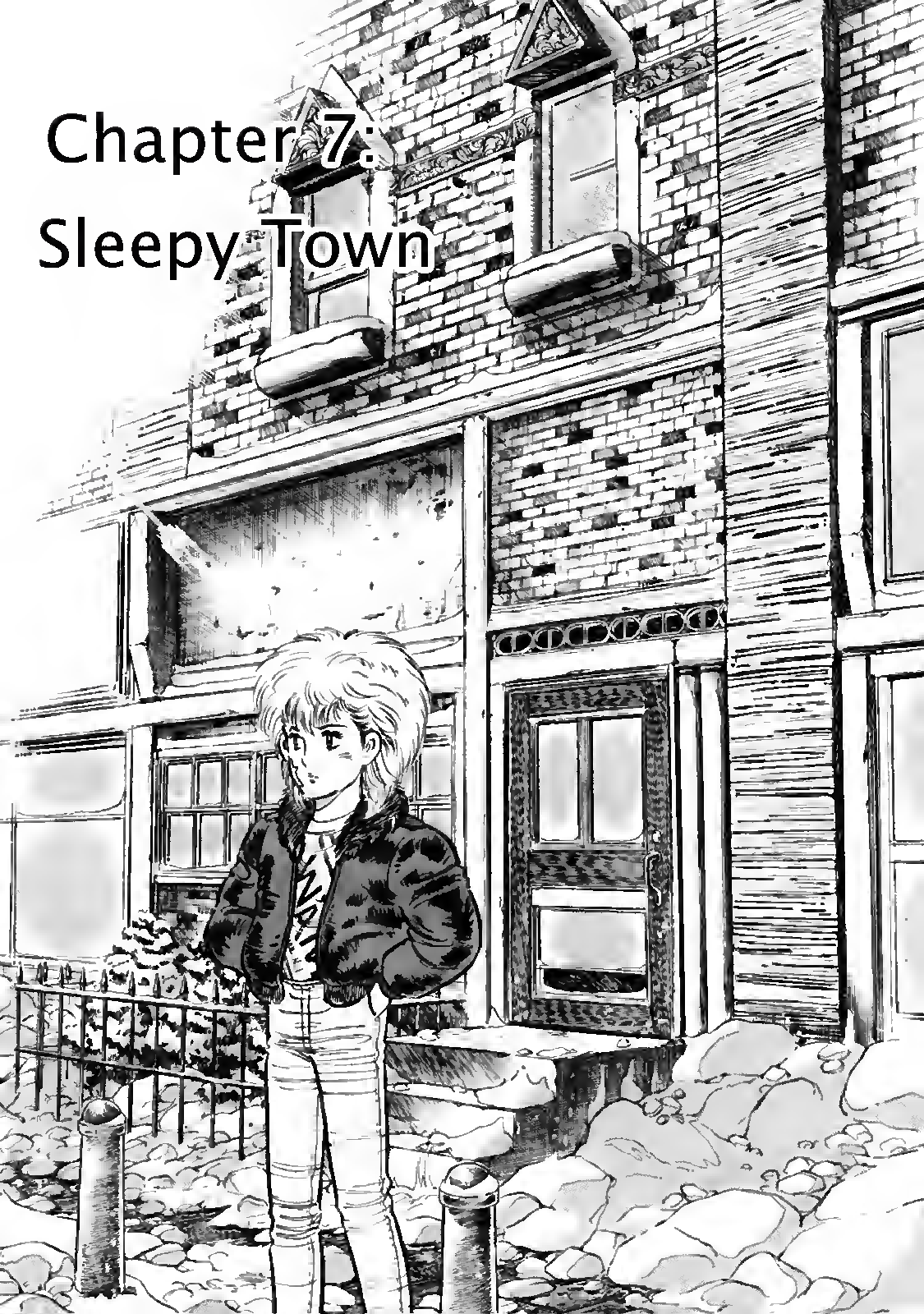

YAK
YAK
YAK
YAK
17


And I want to help you get there.
But you need to start reaching for your own success, too.
You're the Goddess of Luck.

...I swear I'll...
Gunma, if you ever hurt Sako...



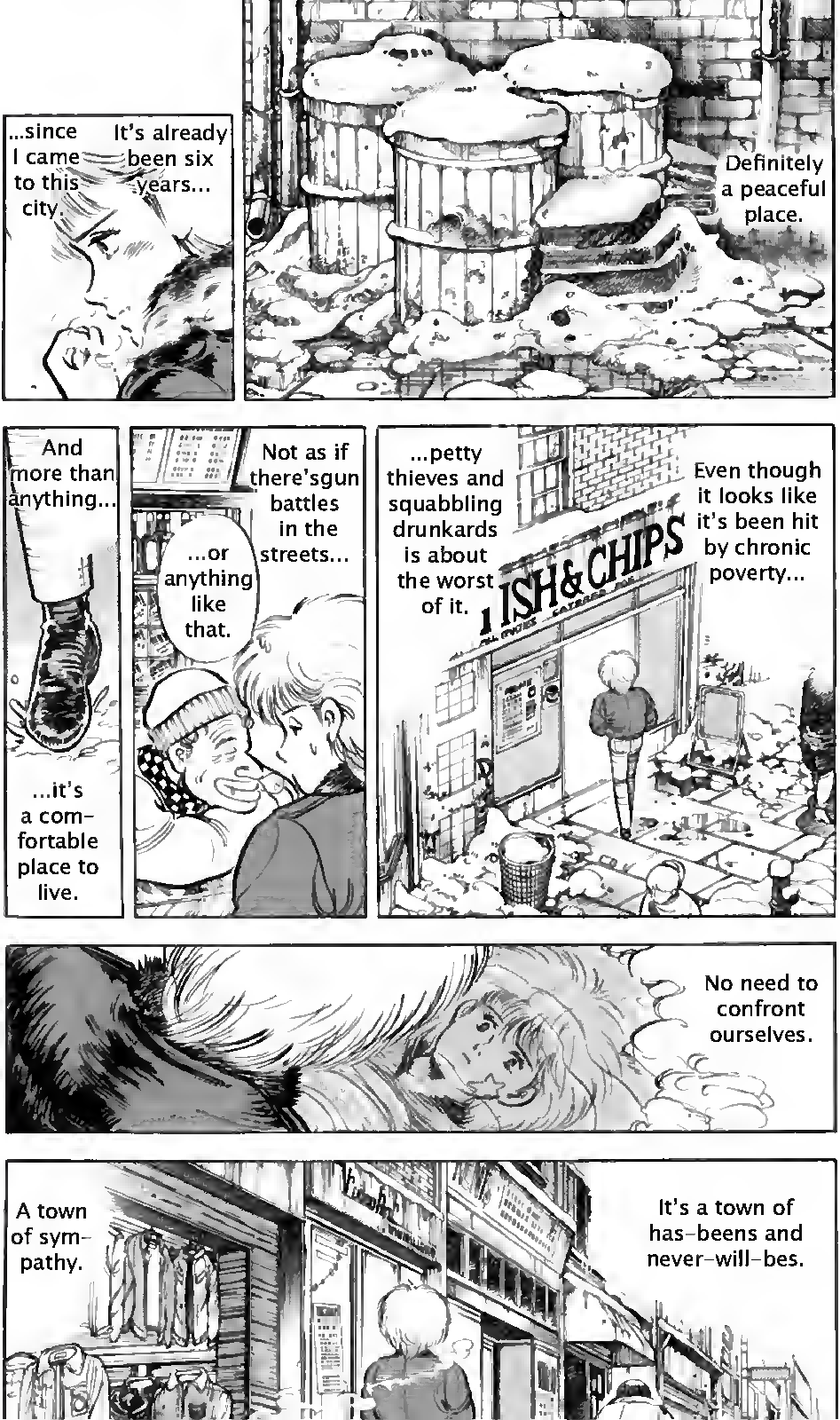
Chapter 7: Sleepy Town



You're out early today, Sako.
TRUDGE
TRUDGE
Good morning.
SIGH
STILS

Drinking from the early morning now, are we?
Come join us at the usual spot, we're having a bonfire party.
With all this snow, there's not much to do but drink the day away.

Can't argue with that.
Peace-ful...
Yep. What a peaceful city we live in, huh?


...since I came to this city,
It's already been six years...
Definitely a peaceful place.
And more than anything...
...it's a comfortable place to live.
Not as if there'sgun battles in the streets...
...or anything like that.
...petty thieves and squabbling drunkards is about the worst of it.
FISH & CHIPS
Even though it looks like it's been hit by chronic poverty...
No need to confront ourselves.
A town of sympathy.
It's a town of has-beens and never-will-bes.

All of England, even all the world will hear you sing.
You'll shoot up to the top of the charts.
I want to give you a record deal, Sako.
I'm very impressed with your songs.
Sako!
KACHUK
Take a chance on something great.
Whoa, it's snowing out there?
Gun-ma...
What's up, Sako? How come you're standing there?
Yawn ... Man I slept good.

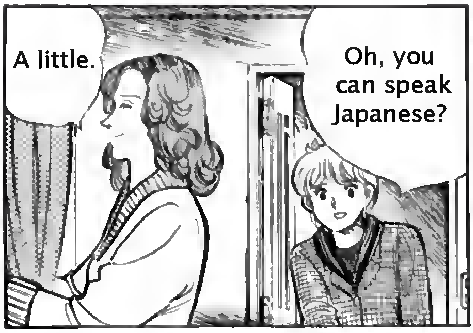
I'm scared.
I can't help it, I'm just scared.
FISH & CHIPS

SHIVER
ガチ
ガチ
ガチ
SHIVER
ガチ
SHIVER

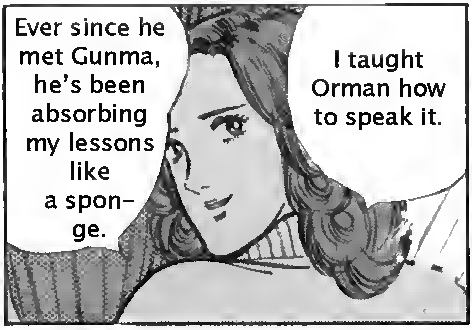
Sako...?

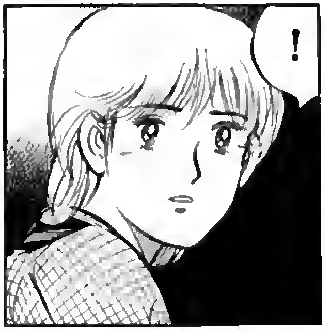
Don't be silly. We never had children, so we have an extra room for you. It's just me and my eccentric wife.
I wouldn't want to impose, Mr. Orman.
It's not easy living in a hotel every day. You could rent a flat easy enough, but London's been getting dangerous.
We've been married and divorced 53 times.
?
So I think it's best if you moved in with us.
?
So technically, she's not my wife at the moment I suppose.
So nice to meet you.
Allow me to introduce you. Ms. Anna, this is Junko Komori.

Macau...!?
Ah yes, I remember now.
It seems I've met you somewhere before, haven't I?
That's right, in Macau.
On the contrary, Mr. Orman.
You went to cheer for Gunma. It seems you and he are more than friends then.
Yes, that's it.
That's it?
Gunma and I were once teammates, and nothing more.


A little.
Oh, you can speak Japanese?

This will be your room, Junko.


Ever since he met Gunma, he's been absorbing my lessons like a sponge.
I taught Orman how to speak it.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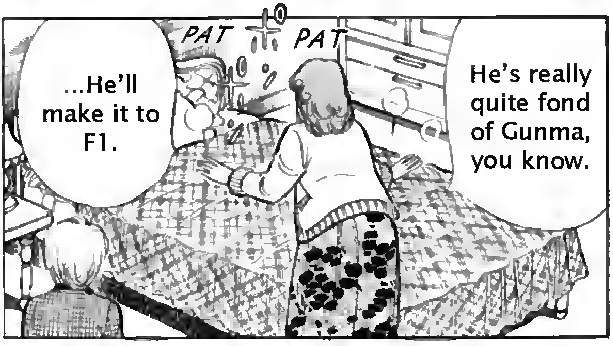
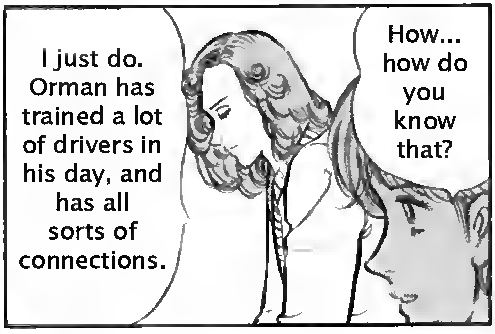

PAT
PAT
...He'll make it to F1.
He's really quite fond of Gunma, you know.

...he'll most likely move up to F1 with Tyrrell or Brabham next season.
If Gunma can make it through a season of F3000 with his current team...


How... how do you know that?
I just do. Orman has trained a lot of drivers in his day, and has all sorts of connections.

That is...
...if Gunma doesn't die first.
Orman is famed for his knack of finding gifted drivers.
And I think Gunma is likely one of those.
I...
But I want to be straight with you.
I'm sorry to talk like that.
If you really love Gunma, you have to be prepared for the worst.
Orman's prodigies are overwhelming proof of that.
Anna...
The gifted ones are always closest to death.
But Junko...

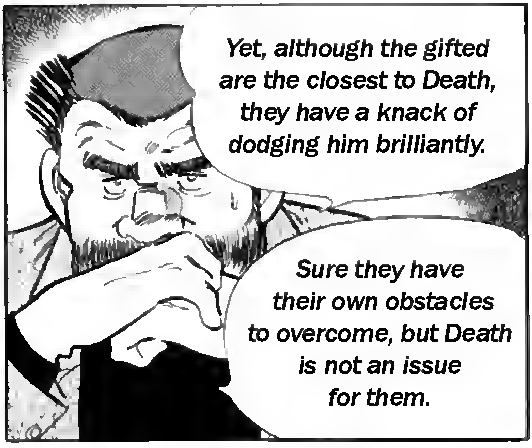
So far, I've taken 16 exceptional drivers under my wing.
Are you saying I hold the curse of death?
Not to mention their incredible driving skills.
TUK
Each and every one of them were good blokes. Friendly, with a great sense of humor, and wonderful personalities.
And 13 of them are now dead.
TUK
Although they were talented, I'm sorry to say that none of them were truly gifted.
But Anna...
TUK
Take a look at Niki Lauda. He was champion in 1975, and the next year he was in a terrible accident at the German Grand Prix, on the verge of dying, but made a miraculous comeback and won two more championships after that.
To be truly gifted, you've got to be on friendly terms with Death.
THUMP

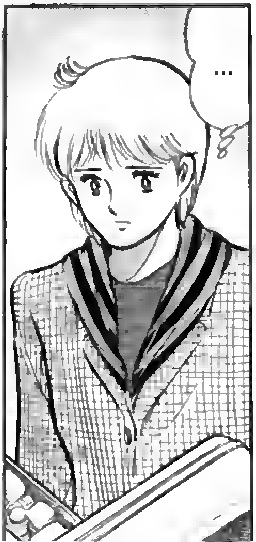
I don't mean to talk bad of those who met an unfortunate fate.
Death pays everyone a visit sooner or later.

Jackie Stewart is another great example, winning 27 Grand Prix races at the F1 level!
Or how about Mario Andretti, still enjoying Indy racing with his son!

Anna, how about we get married for the 54th time?
I'll think about it.

Ob-stacles ...


Yet, although the gifted are the closest to Death, they have a knack of dodging him brilliantly.
Sure they have their own obstacles to overcome, but Death is not an issue for them.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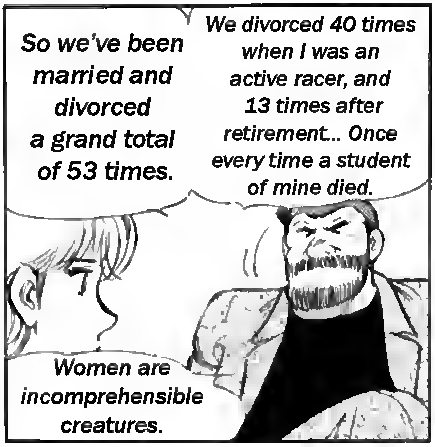
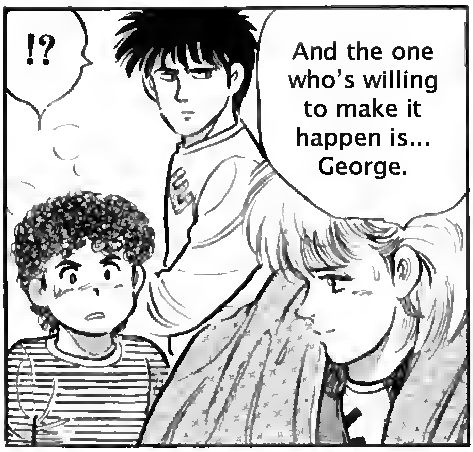
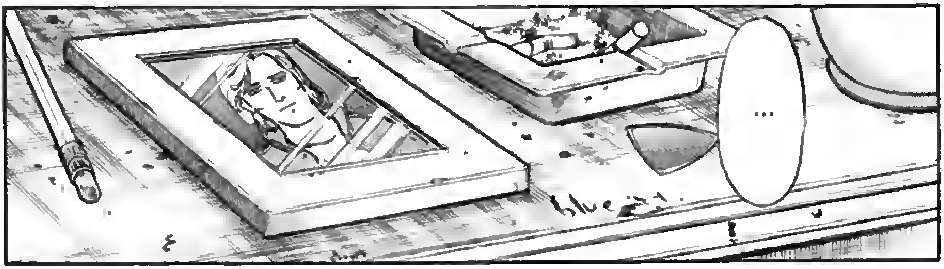

So we've been married and divorced a grand total of 53 times.
We divorced 40 times when I was an active racer, and 13 times after retirement... Once every time a student of mine died.
Women are incomprehensible creatures.

SLAM

Stay with her, Peabow.
A hot cup of coffee will calm her down.
I dunno... I just am...
Sako...
What are you scared of, Sako?
Now listen up, kid...
Huh?
It's your fault, Gunma! You and that translator lady are too friendly!
It's...
I really do know what I'm afraid of. I'm sorry...
It's not that, Peabow.


!?
And the one who's willing to make it happen is... George.

You got a record deal!?
What!?
That's amazing!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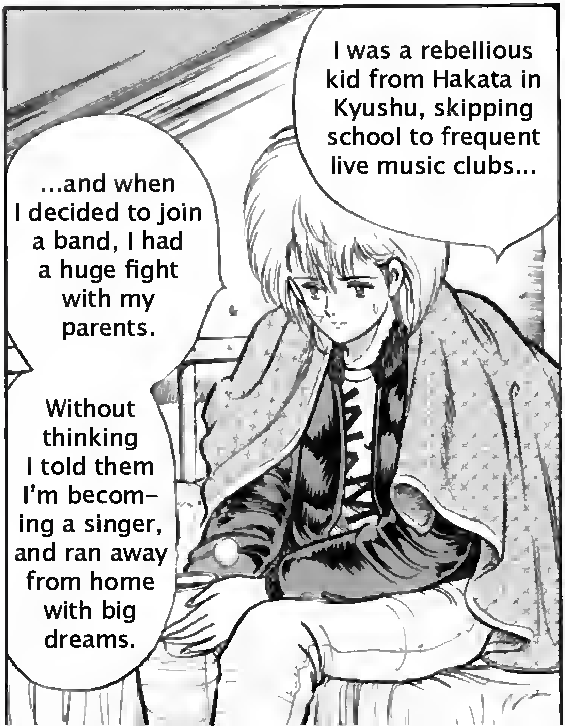
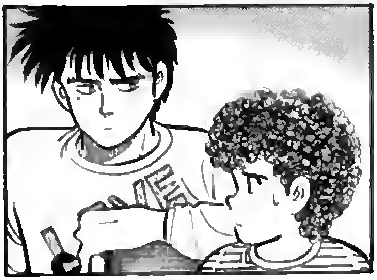
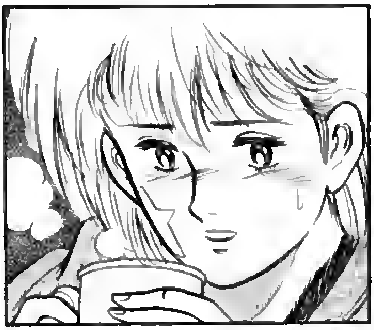

I was a rebellious kid from Hakata in Kyushu, skipping school to frequent live music clubs...
...and when I decided to join a band, I had a huge fight with my parents.
Without thinking I told them I'm becoming a singer, and ran away from home with big dreams.





I made it out to Tokyo easily enough...
...but I was failing contests and blowing auditions one after another.
And no one had any interest in my demo tapes.
I was in a downward spiral, but people in my circle where finding all kinds of success...
"Hey Sako, I didn't know you were still alive!"
"Still trying to get a break with your outdated rock music, huh?"
I was laughed at,made fun of...
...and so frus-trated by it all...
"You ought to cross over into enka."
"You can work as my assistant! That would suit you better!"
"If you don't have the talent, you gotta sell your body! It's all about body image!"
I know it sounds stupid.
...
...that I vowed to come to England and make it big.
So what if it's George. He said you'll get a record deal, right?
But you don't get it, George is behind all this.
'Cause you're about to do what you set out to do, here in England.
No it don't.

I'm more nervous than I've ever been.
I mean... You need talent to make records.
And how come you're so nervous?
That ain't like you, Sako.
GRIP
What are you gonna do?
Sako...
S...
...don't have what it takes.
And I just...
Don't give me that.
...
VAM
Vol. No.1

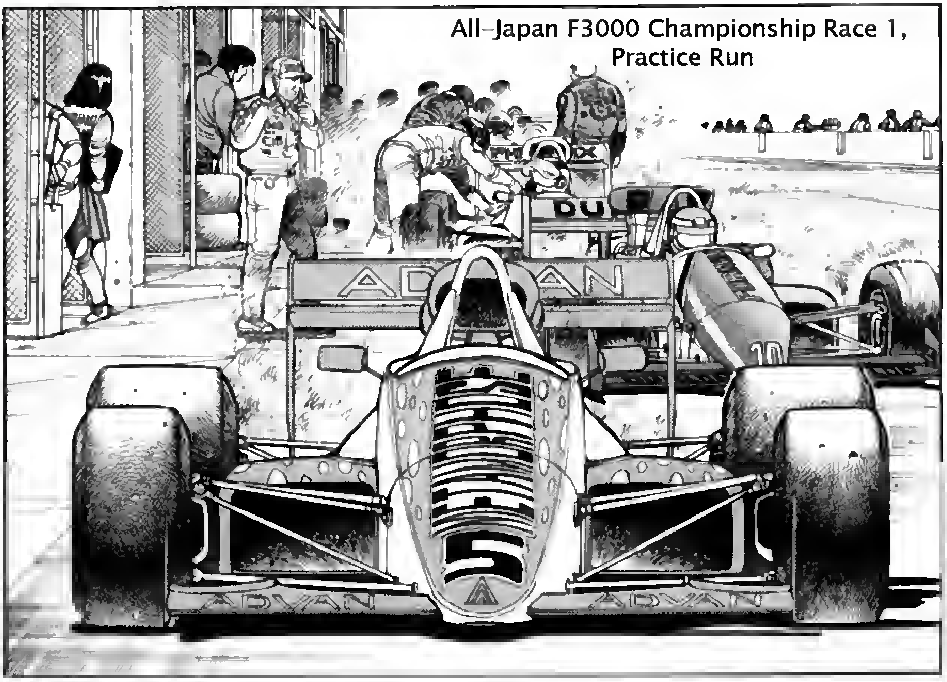
Y-You...
What are you doing, Gunma?
Don't give me that crap, you idiot!
Gunma ...
All that cheering, applause, and those tears they shed for you, don't you think that's worth anything!?
What about all those guys at the pub...
You're sayin' you don't got the talent, and you're scared!?
...listenin' to you every damn night 'cause you cheer 'em up, or make 'em cry their damn hearts out!?
You can't run all the way to the afterlife.
Don't run away from it.
...you touch our hearts more than any singer I've ever heard!
To me and Peabow, and those guys at the pub at least...

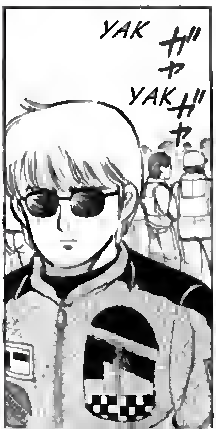
...
Ain't that what you told me?
I...
I did.
I just gotta suck it up...
And you're right.
...and sing my heart out.

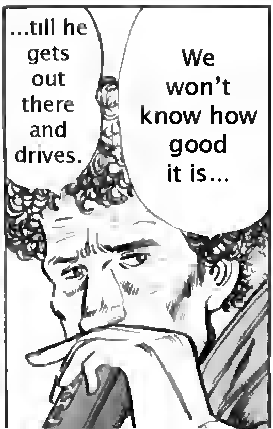
George, I want to sign that contract.
For all the drunkards of the world.

Chapter 8:
Bleeding it Out

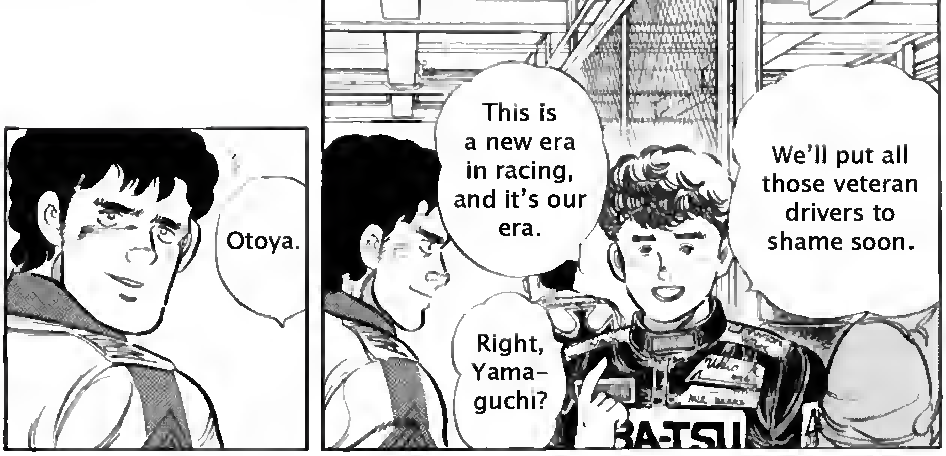
Suzuka, March 1989

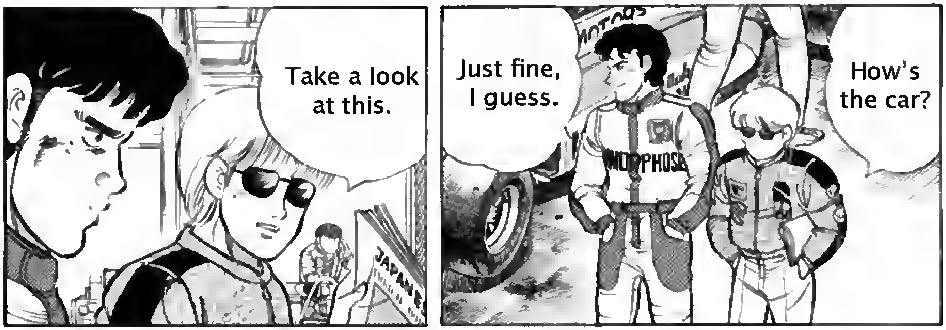






But he's gotta get out there and record some times.
We've still got some settings to adjust, and the engine needs some work.
CABIN


Otoya.
This is a new era in racing, and it's our era.
We'll put all those veteran drivers to shame soon.
Right, Yamaguchi?

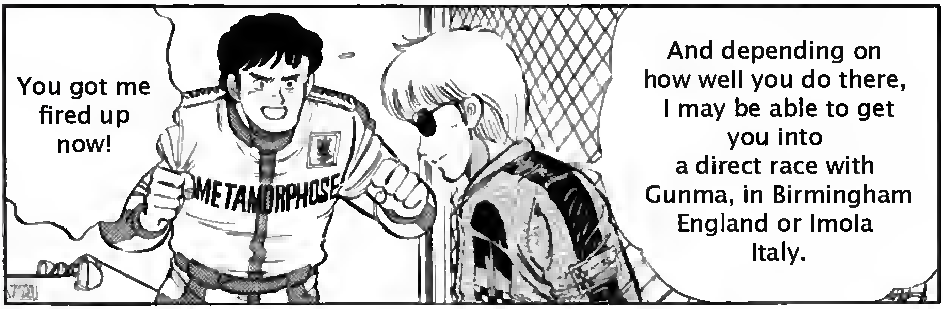

Take a look at this.
Just fine, I guess.
How's the car?

"Japanese driver Gunma Akagi, the Macau Grand Prix champion, to race FIA International F3000!"
"As the promising second driver on Hans Racing Team!"
!!
APANESE
TERNATIONAL FORMULA 3000

Screw that!
AUTOSPORT
SMACK
Gunma Akagi has been reborn.
I guess the rumors were true.
What the hell is all this!?
Why him of all people!?
At any rate...
...this means he's a step closer to F1 than you are.
To get a Super License...
...the FIA's got an unwritten rule that you have to race F3000 internationally.
On the contrary, that's all we can do.
So what are we gonna do, Yuma!? We can't just sit back and watch it happen!

You gotta do something, Yuma! I thought Gunma was your enemy, too!
Don't give me that garbage! How come some punk who can't even beat me gets to race F1 before me!?
Not an ene-my.
A rival.
Same damn thing!
...
Veteran driver Hoshino took the series championship from you, and your fifth-place ranking was a huge disap-pointment.
Anyway, Team Metamorphose was very dissatisfied with your results last year.
But we can't do squat with your current ranking!
Now that Gunma Akagi has risen from the ashes, I want to get you racing International F3000 as soon as possible.
Exactly.
So basi-cally...
...I just gotta win some races!
METAMORPHOSE

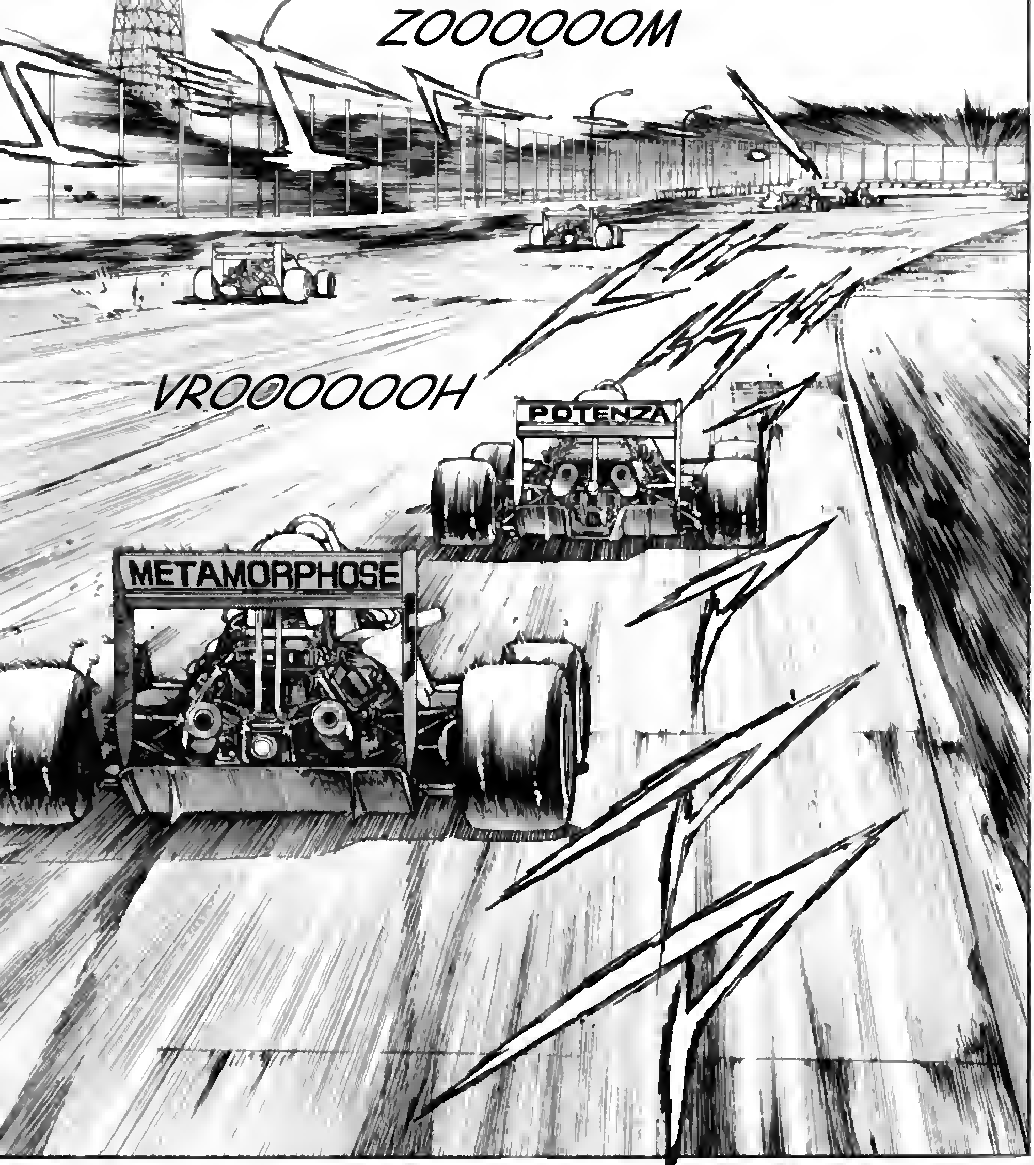
It's a promise.
You really mean that?
If you can win four of six races in the first half of this season...
...I'll send you overseas to race F3000 this summer.
METAMORPHOSE


You got me fired up now!
And depending on how well you do there, I may be able to get you into a direct race with Gunma, in Birmingham England or Imola Italy.
METAMORPHOSE

Meaning Gunma just might enter F3000 in Japan.
...he'll make a move before we do.
But it's possible...

That's the spirit!

I'll send his sorry ass into retirement if he does!
Oh hell yeah!
METAMORPHOSE


ZOOOOOOM
VROOOOOOH
POTENZA
METAMORPHOSE

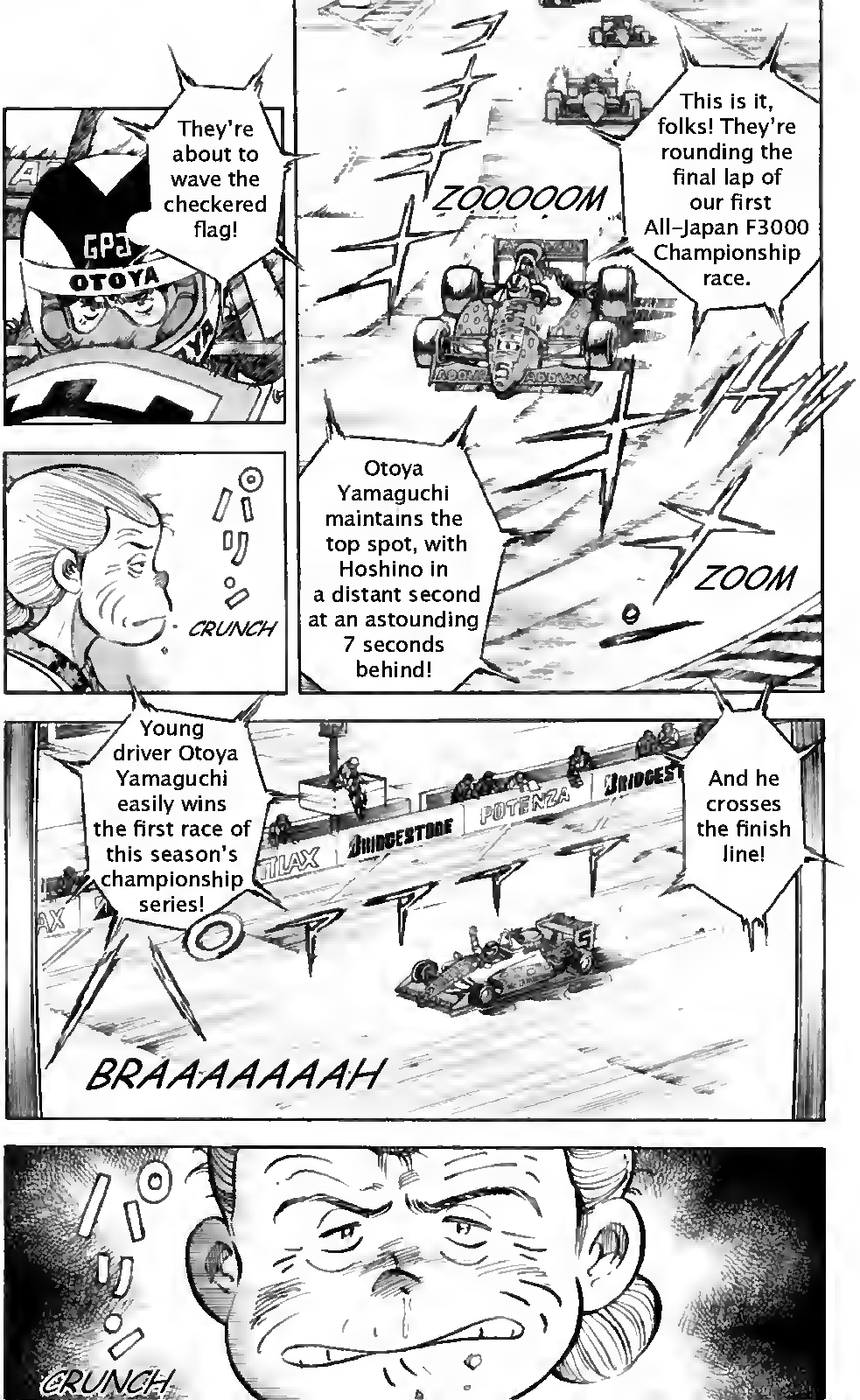
But I knew you'd do it.

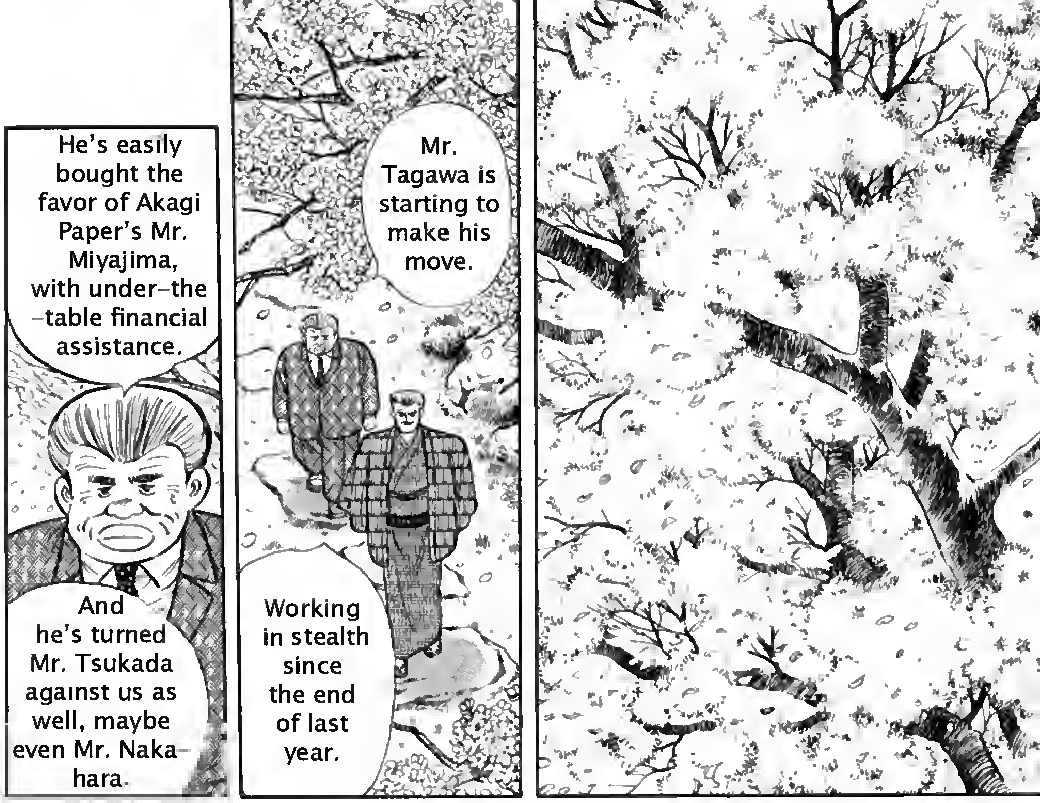
It's about time.
So you're back, brother.

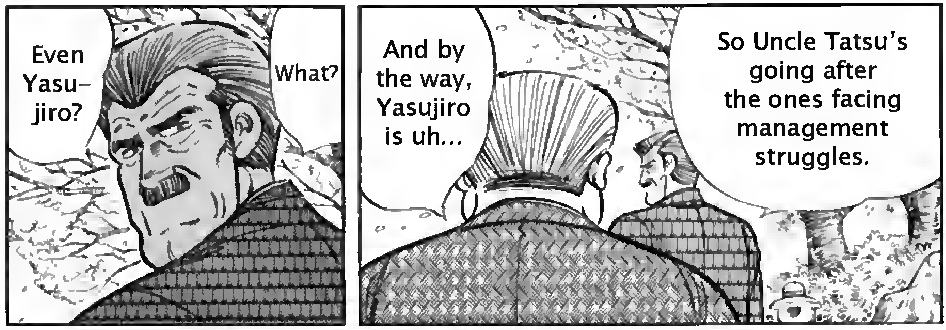
Check this out.
Not at all!
But aren't you disappointed, Tamotsu?
EWOOH
Real-ly?
Tears streamin' down my face each time I looked.
SNIFF
Looked at it over and over again, I was so happy.
I saw it.
When he said he'd quit racin', now that was disappointing.
Really. I mean, he's back! "Nobody-gets-in-front-of-me" Gunma is back and full of life! I'm incredibly happy.
...Gunma will be headed for F1 without you, Tamotsu.
...it's possible that...
But...

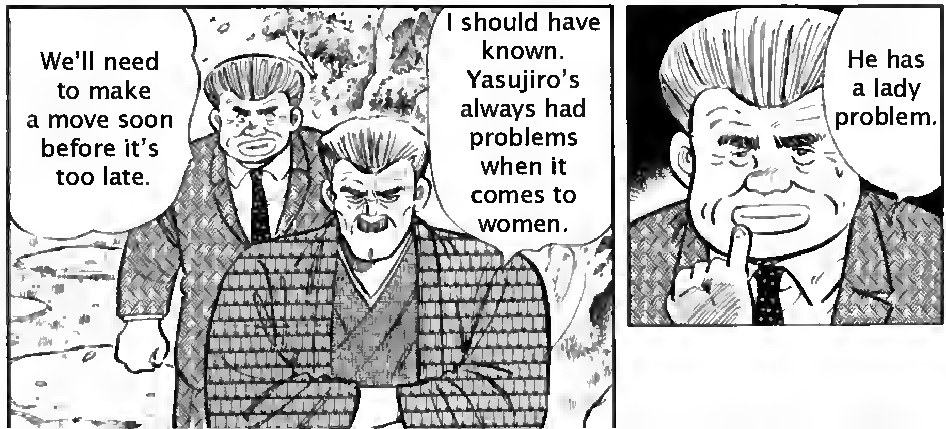
That's outta my control.
If he goes without me, then I'll know what I'm worth to Gunma.
And I'll work at his side no matter what.
But if he needs me, he'll come get me no matter what. That's the kinda guy he is.
I get it...
Uh-huh...
Friendship between men is really quite simple, isn't it.
That's what he said.
Hey Tamotsu is very valuable to our business.
But if Gunma ever tries to take him from us, we can't try to stop him.
Of course.

On his 15th lap, No. 5 Otoya Yamaguchi has finally moved into first place!
CRUNCH
BRIDGEST
ZOOOOOM
Yamaguchi is really fast!
CRUNCH
...as he leaves a line of veteran drivers in his dust, and takes a large lead!
VOOOOH
METAMORPHOSE
Metamor-phose is glowing in the spring sunlight...
GPJ
TOYA
BRAAAH
OTOYA
Significantly faster than last year!
CRUNCH

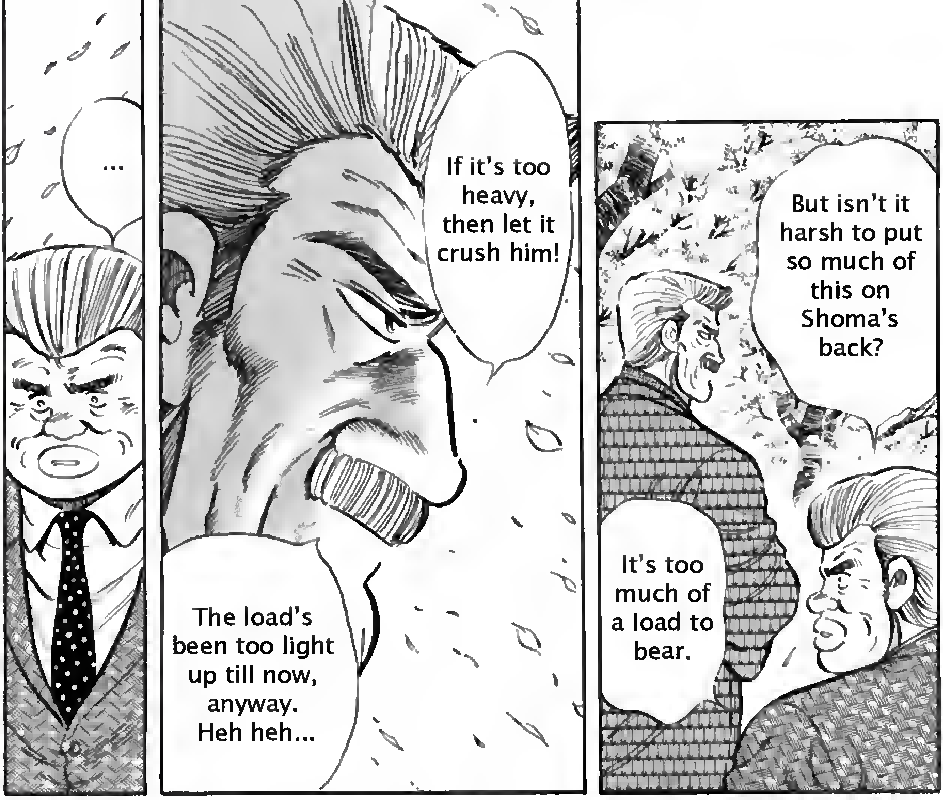

They're about to wave the checkered flag!
GPJ
OTOYA
ZOOOOOM
This is it, folks! They're rounding the final lap of our first All-Japan F3000 Championship race.
ZOOM
Otoya Yamaguchi maintains the top spot, with Hoshino in a distant second at an astounding 7 seconds behind!
CRUNCH
Young driver Otoya Yamaguchi easily wins the first race of this season's championship series!
BRIDGESTONE
POTENZA
BRIDGESTONE
And he crosses the finish line!
BRAAAAAAAH
CRUNCH

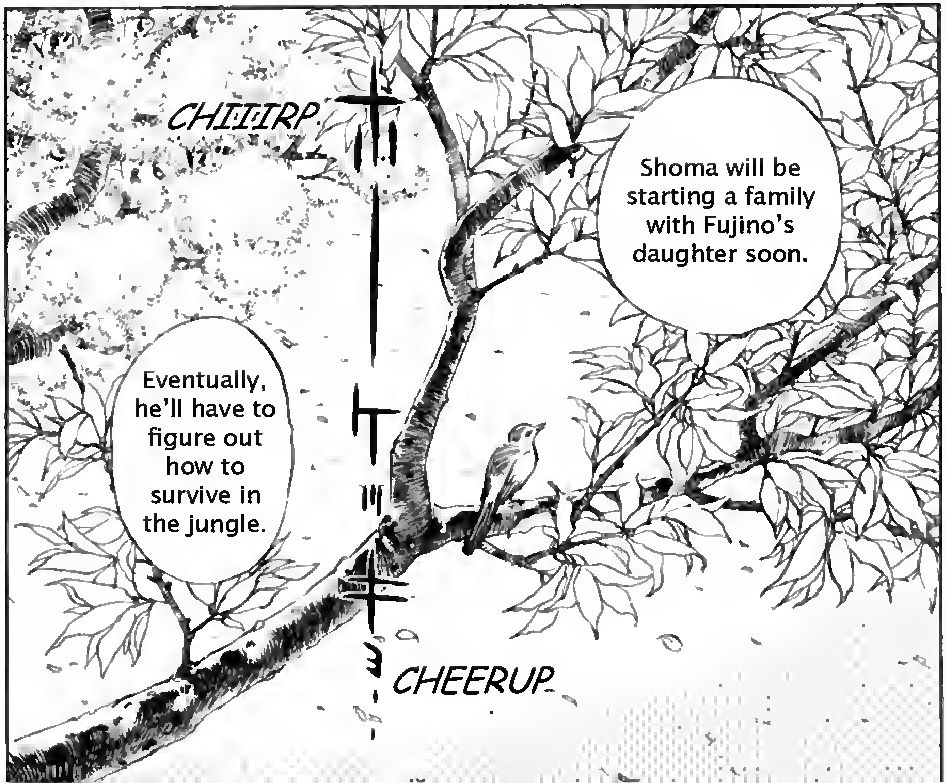

He's easily bought the favor of Akagi Paper's Mr. Miyajima, with under-the-table financial assistance.
And he's turned Mr. Tsukada against us as well, maybe even Mr. Nakahara.
Mr. Tagawa is starting to make his move.
Working in stealth since the end of last year.

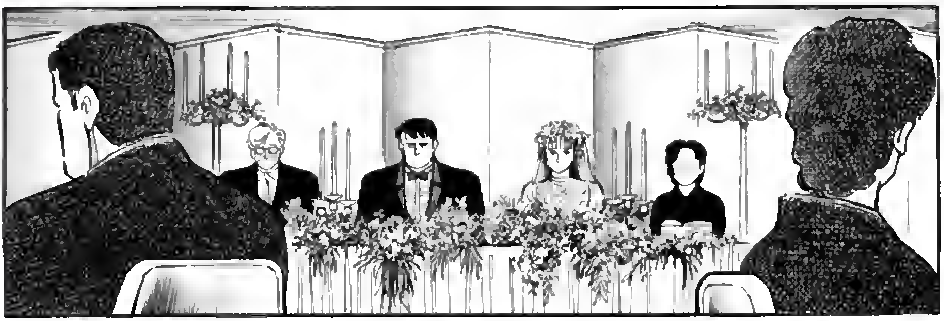

Even Yasujiro?
What?
And by the way, Yasujiro is uh...
So Uncle Tatsu's going after the ones facing management struggles.

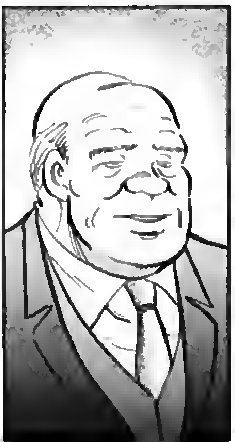

We'll need to make a move soon before it's too late.
I should have known. Yasujiro's always had problems when it comes to women.
He has a lady problem.

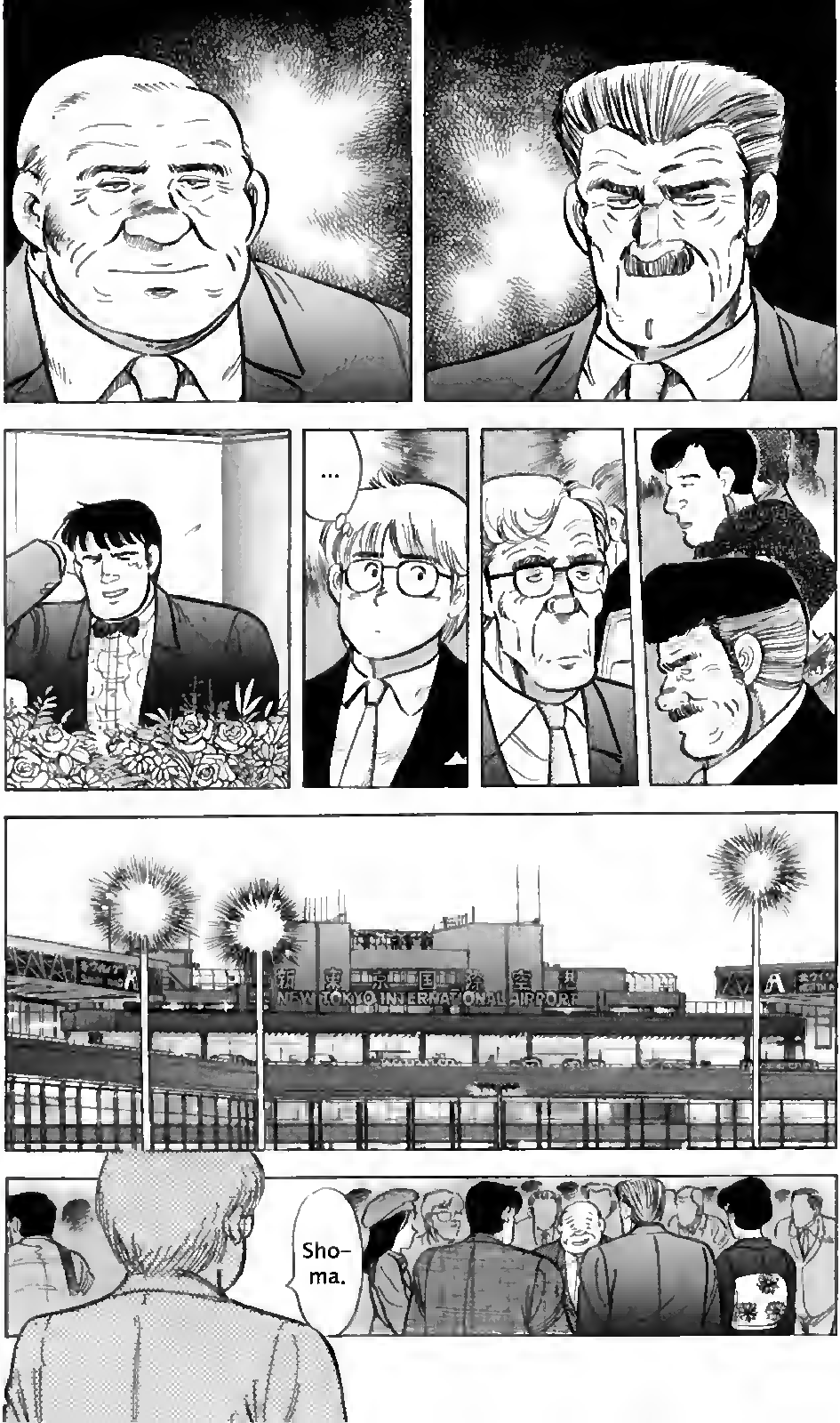
Uncle Tatsu is bleeding it out for us.
Can't you see it, Kasai!?
Heh heh heh... There's no need to panic.
We let the leech do its job.
But Mr. Akagi...
Akagi Group has been a festering wound from the beginning.
The poison.
Bleeding it out?
That's exactly what Uncle Tatsu is doing now!
And the best thing to do is bleed the poison out.
Its inner workings have always been infected in one way or another.
I knew eventually it would require major surgery to heal.
In reality, it's nothing more than a group of talentless, blood-related windbags, basically nobodies.
Akagi Group is great in name only.


...
If it's too heavy, then let it crush him!
The load's been too light up till now, anyway. Heh heh...
But isn't it harsh to put so much of this on Shoma's back?
It's too much of a load to bear.


CHIIRP
Shoma will be starting a family with Fujino's daughter soon.
Eventually, he'll have to figure out how to survive in the jungle.
CHEERUP






...
NEW TOKYO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
Sho-
ma.

You're going to Europe for your honeymoon, right? How about a little detour?
To a quaint little English town called Silver-stone.
You didn't have to do this.
A gift for you.
You can see Gunma racing in all his glory.
Tickets to Race 1 of the FIA Interna-tional F3000!
What are these?
Gunma, huh...
That idiot...
See ya later, and don't waste those tickets!
TAK
Hold on, Yuma ...

GUNMA

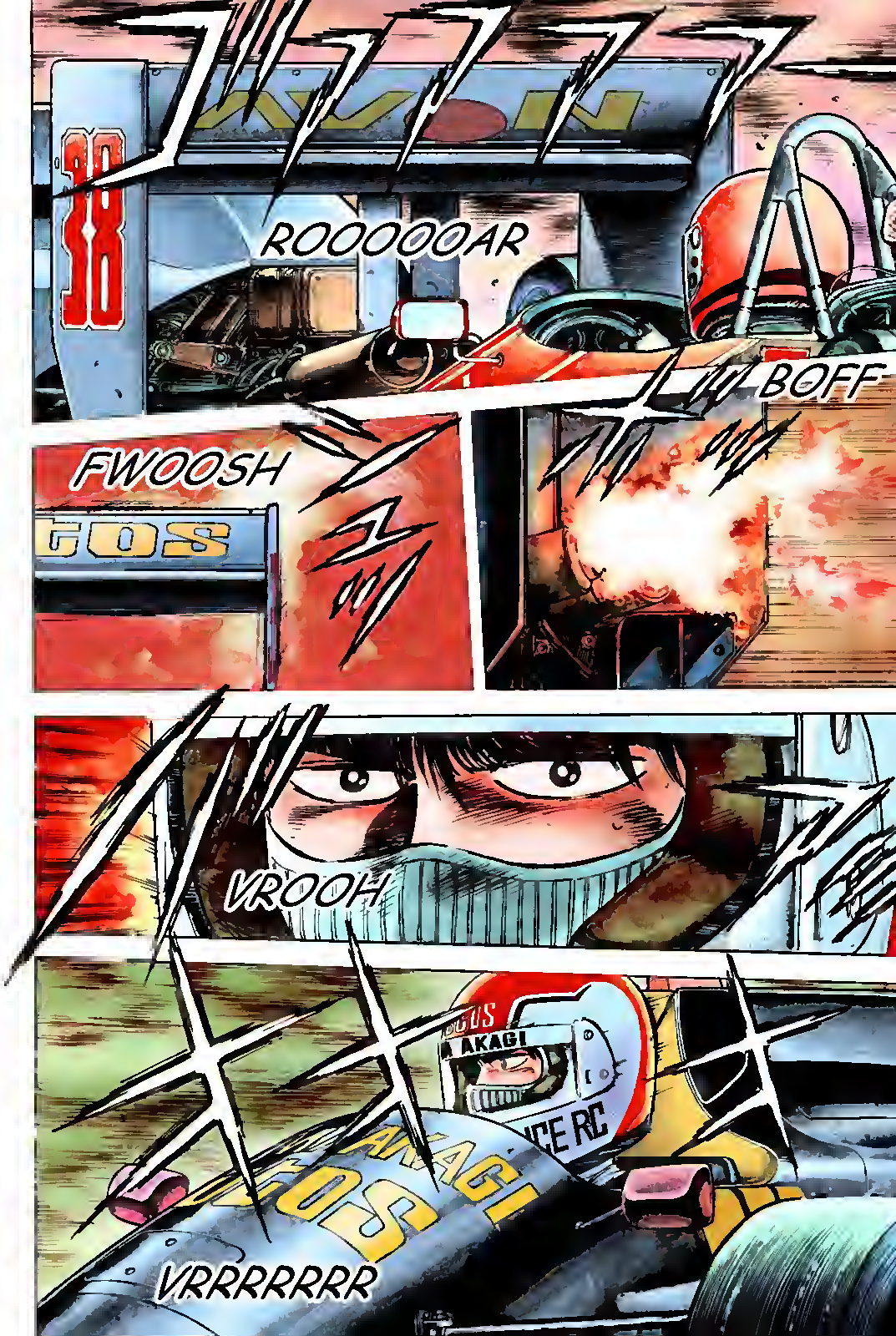
...I'm gettin' somewhere.
Finally ...

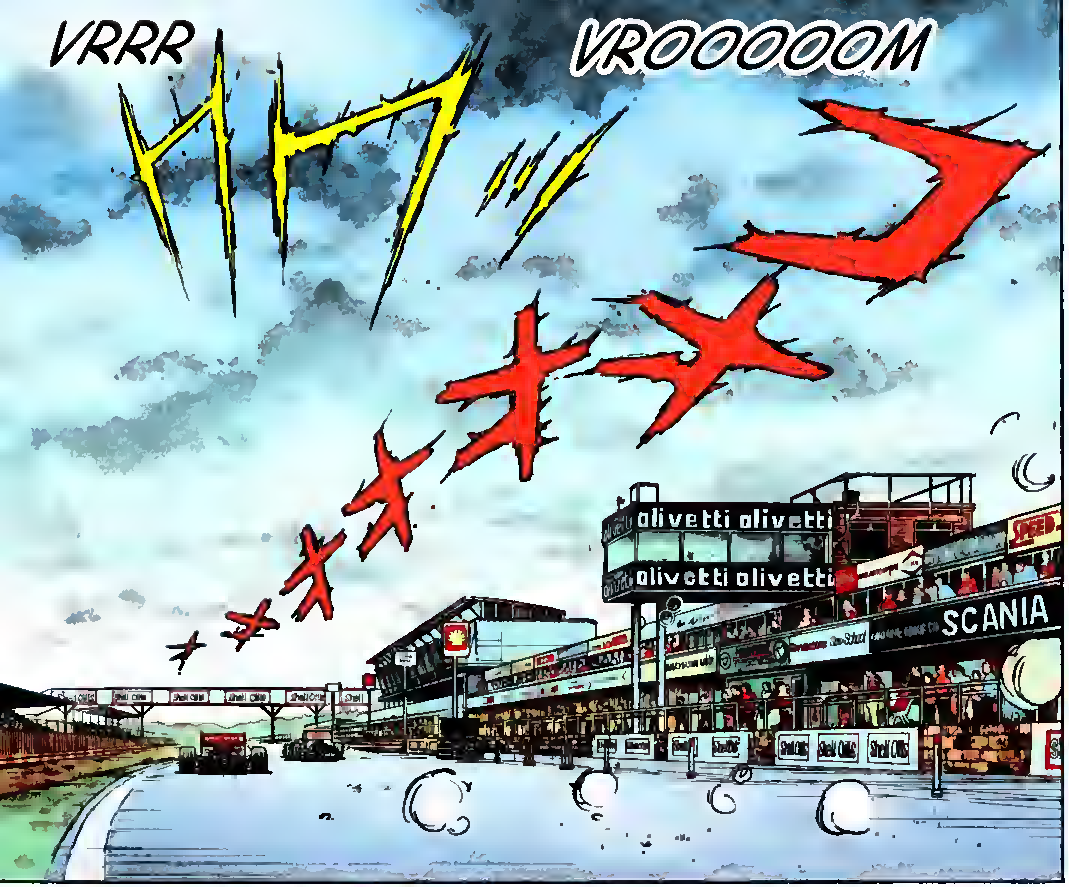
Chapter 9:
Hot Air
HUBOS
GUNMAAKAG
HANGE

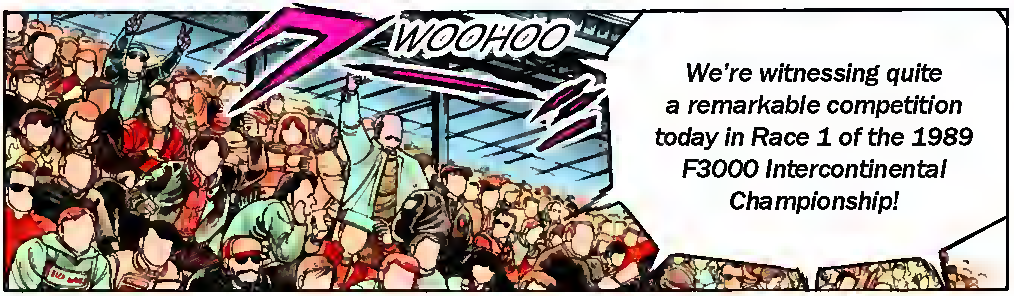
ZOOM
HOT DOG SPECIAL
mutos
GUNMA ARAGI
Shell oils
38
52

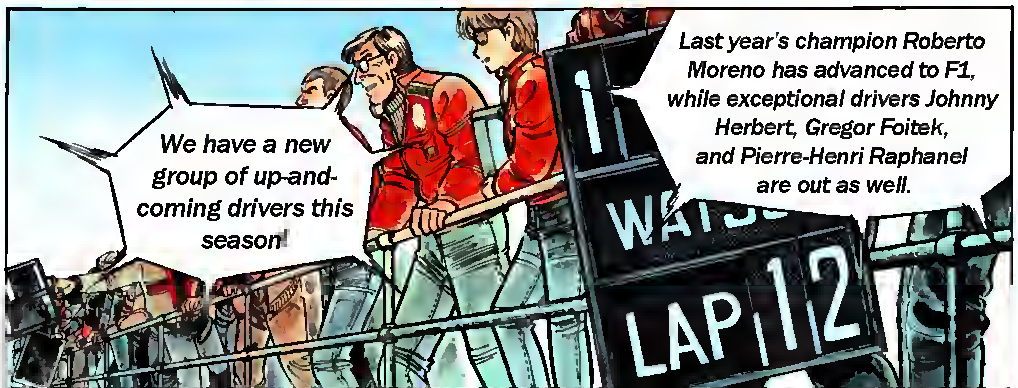
OOM
SPECIAL
HOT DOG SPECIAL
52

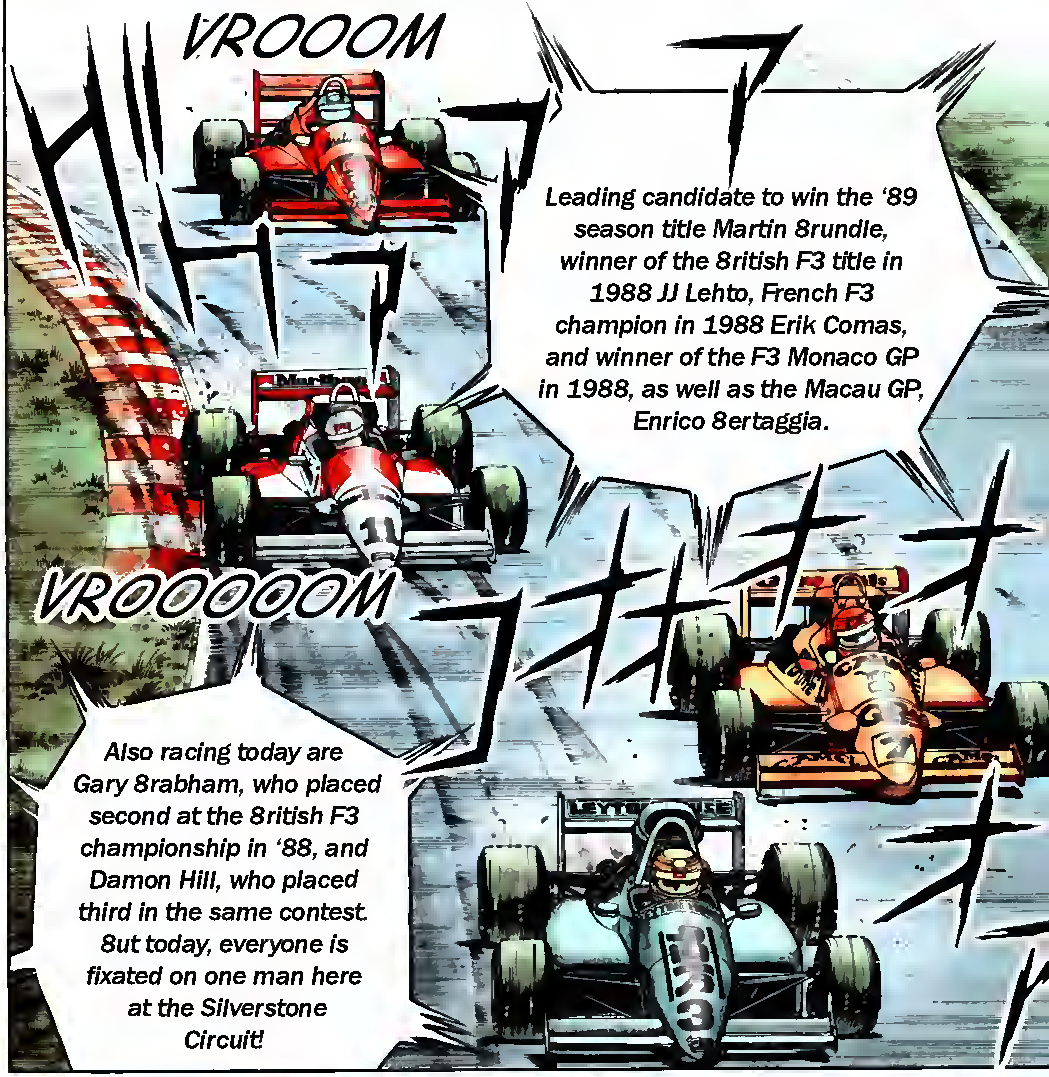
mutos
SHUMA AKAGI
NICE
AKAGI
mutos
Shell oils
38
mutos
mutos

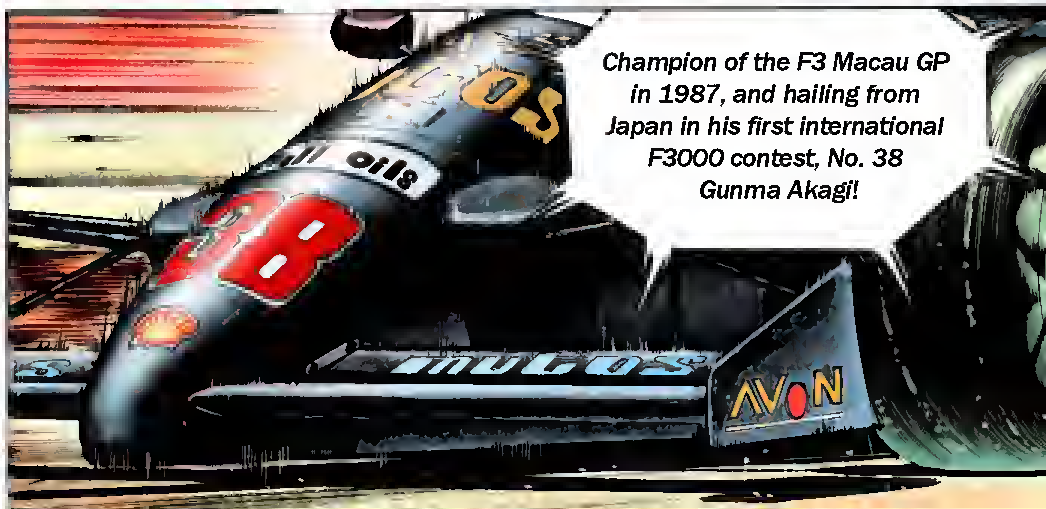

ROOOOOAR
BOFF
FWOOSH
VROOH
AKAGI
VRRRRRRR

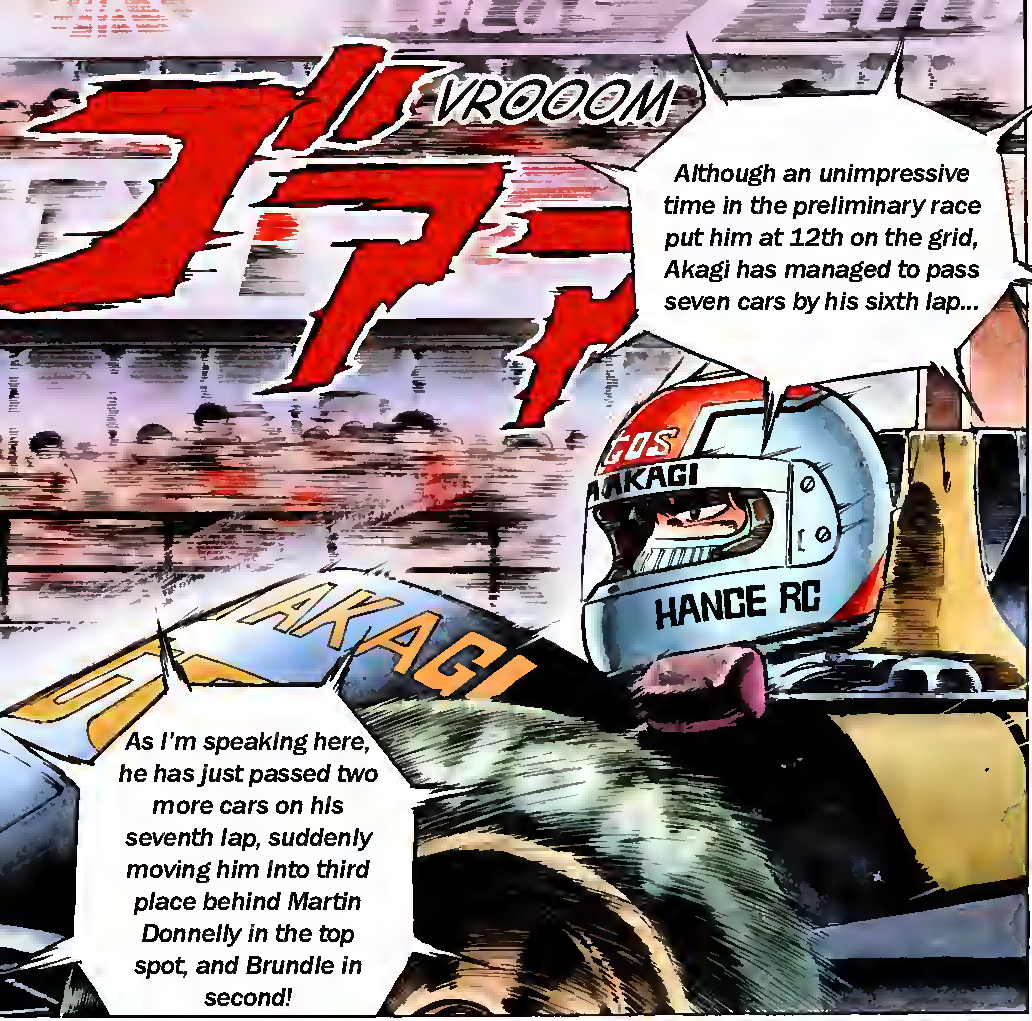

VRRR
VROOOOOM
olivetti olivetti
olivetti olivetti
SCANIA

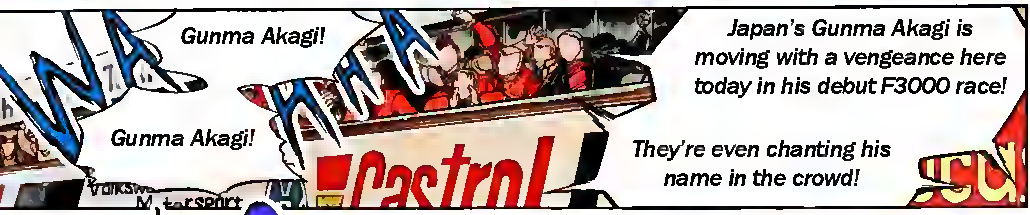

WOOHOO
We're witnessing quite a remarkable competition today in Race 1 of the 1989 F3000 Intercontinental Championship!

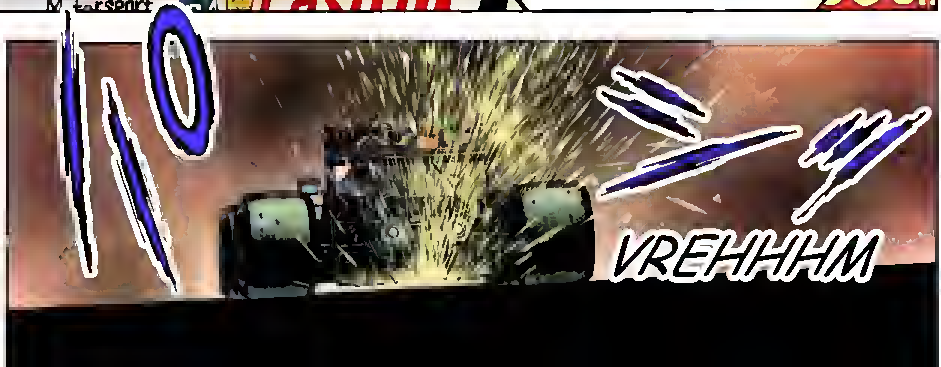

We have a new group of up-and-coming drivers this season!
Last year's champion Roberto Moreno has advanced to F1, while exceptional drivers Johnny Herbert, Gregor Foitek, and Pierre-Henri Raphanel are out as well.
LAP 12


VROOOM
VROOOOOM
Leading candidate to win the '89 season title Martin Brundle, winner of the British F3 title in 1988 JJ Lehto, French F3 champion in 1988 Erik Comas, and winner of the F3 Monaco GP in 1988, as well as the Macau GP, Enrico Bertaggia.
Also racing today are Gary Brabham, who placed second at the British F3 championship in '88, and Damon Hill, who placed third in the same contest. But today, everyone is fixated on one man here at the Silverstone Circuit!


Champion of the F3 Macau GP in 1987, and hailing from Japan in his first international F3000 contest, No. 38 Gunma Akagi!
AVON


VROOOM
Although an unimpressive time in the preliminary race put him at 12th on the grid, Akagi has managed to pass seven cars by his sixth lap...
AKAGI
HANCE RC
AKAGI
As I'm speaking here, he has just passed two more cars on his seventh lap, suddenly moving him into third place behind Martin Donnelly in the top spot, and Brundle in second!


Gunma Akagi!
Gunma Akagi!
Japan's Gunma Akagi is moving with a vengeance here today in his debut F3000 race!
They're even chanting his name in the crowd!
Castrol

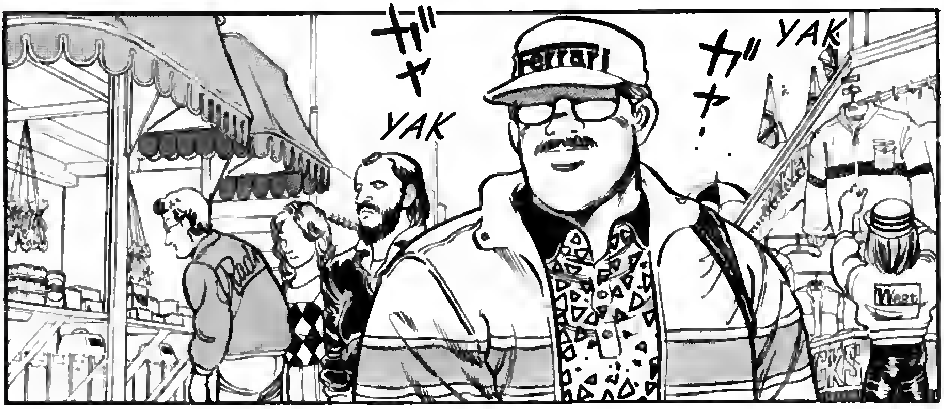

VREHHHM

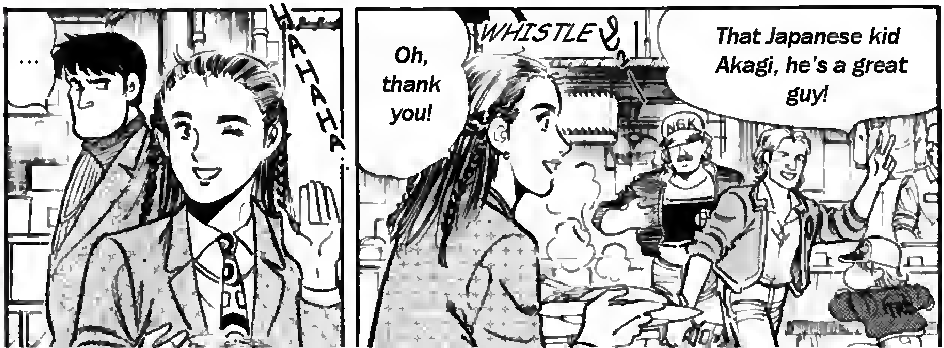
FWOOSH
BAH
WOOHOO
FWOOSH

ZOOOOOM
-YEAHHH
WOOHOOOO
Look at these imbeciles.
...
Wow... What a sound!
Just happy by nature?
Or maybe their IQs are well under average.
I don't get what they're so excited about.
...?

'Kay sweetie?
I'm in the mood for some fish and chips with a Coke!

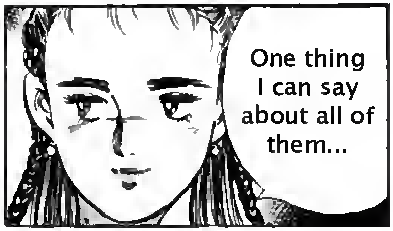
Either way, watching a bunch of noisy cars drive around in a circle over and over again...
...and getting worked up into a mad frenzy about it, makes me seriously doubt their intelligence.
VRRRRR


YAK
YAK
Ferrari

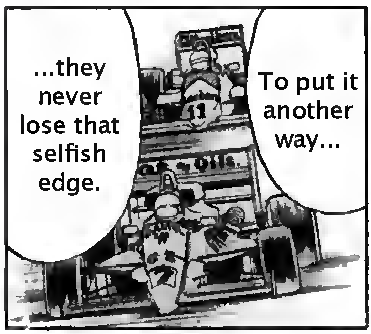

...
HAHAHA...
Oh, thank you!
WHISTLE
That Japanese kid Akagi, he's a great guy!

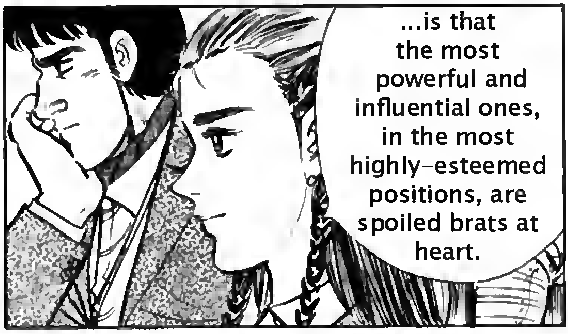
FRESH·D
This is the first time I've been to a circuit, and it's actually pretty fun!
I'll have to thank Yuma for those tickets.
Marlboro
How come?
I'm surprised to hear that from you.
You just seem so out of place here.
It's such a raucous, crude place, and stinks of oil.
Thanks to Yuma's so-called gift I had to drag you out here to see this mess.
Now now, Shoma.
Pfft...
This is supposed to be our honey-moon, and I'm sick to my sto-mach!
But I can't take anymore. Let's go back to our original schedule.
!?
Don't run away!

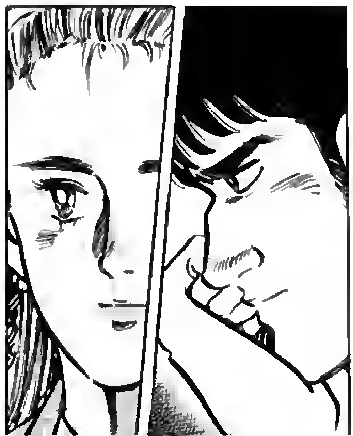
I've spent time with some very influential people in the political and financial world.
And I've learned a good deal from it.

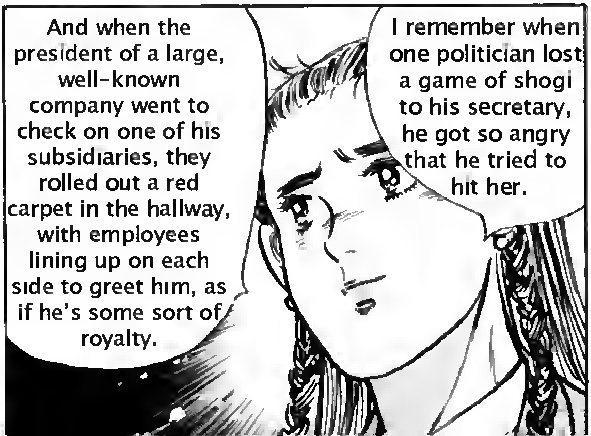

One thing I can say about all of them...

I'm telling you this as your wife...
VRRVRROOOM
...my father and Uncle Tatsu have taken me to meet so many kinds of people since I was a child.

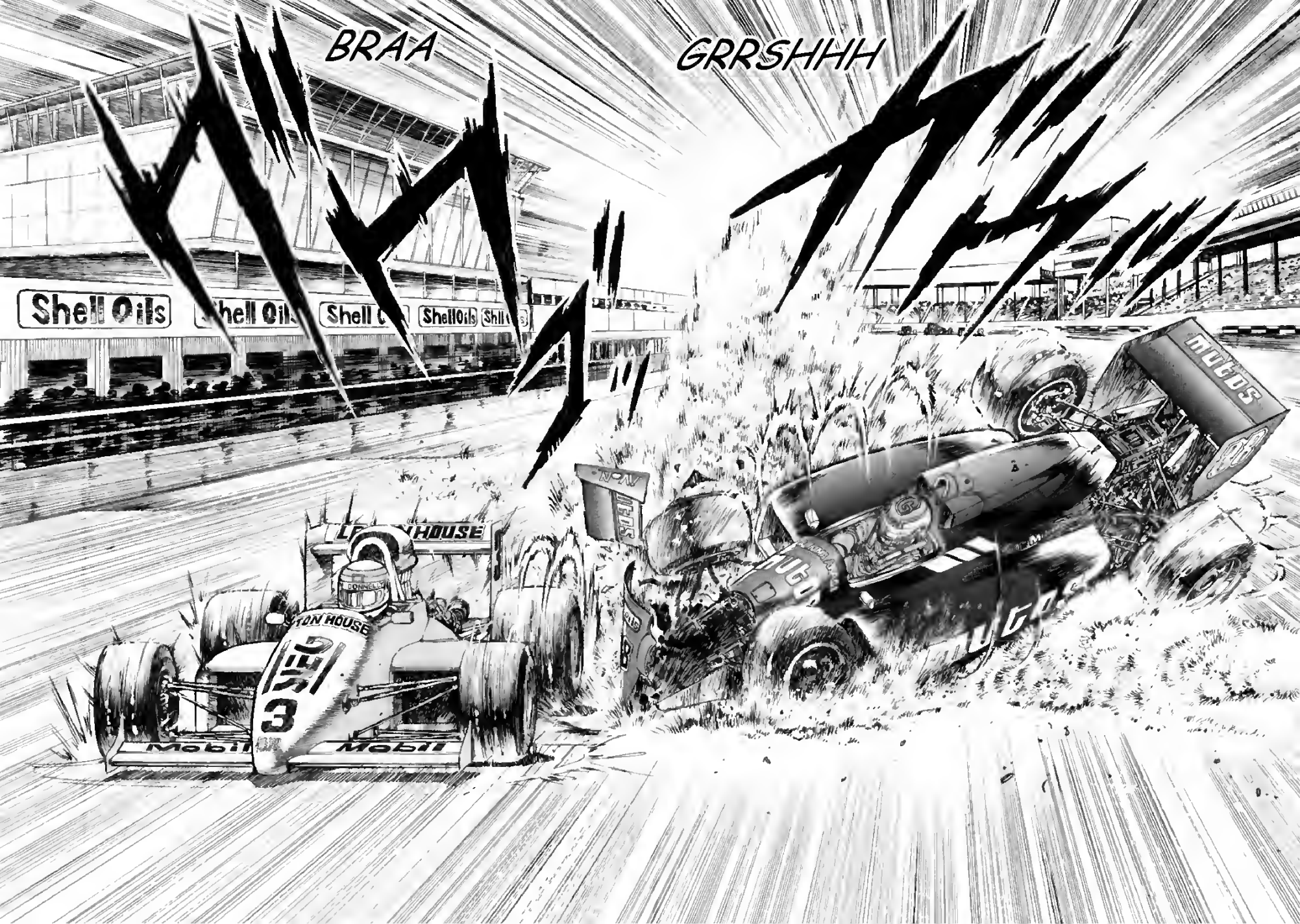

...they never lose that selfish edge.
To put it another way...


...is that the most powerful and influential ones, in the most highly-esteemed positions, are spoiled brats at heart.

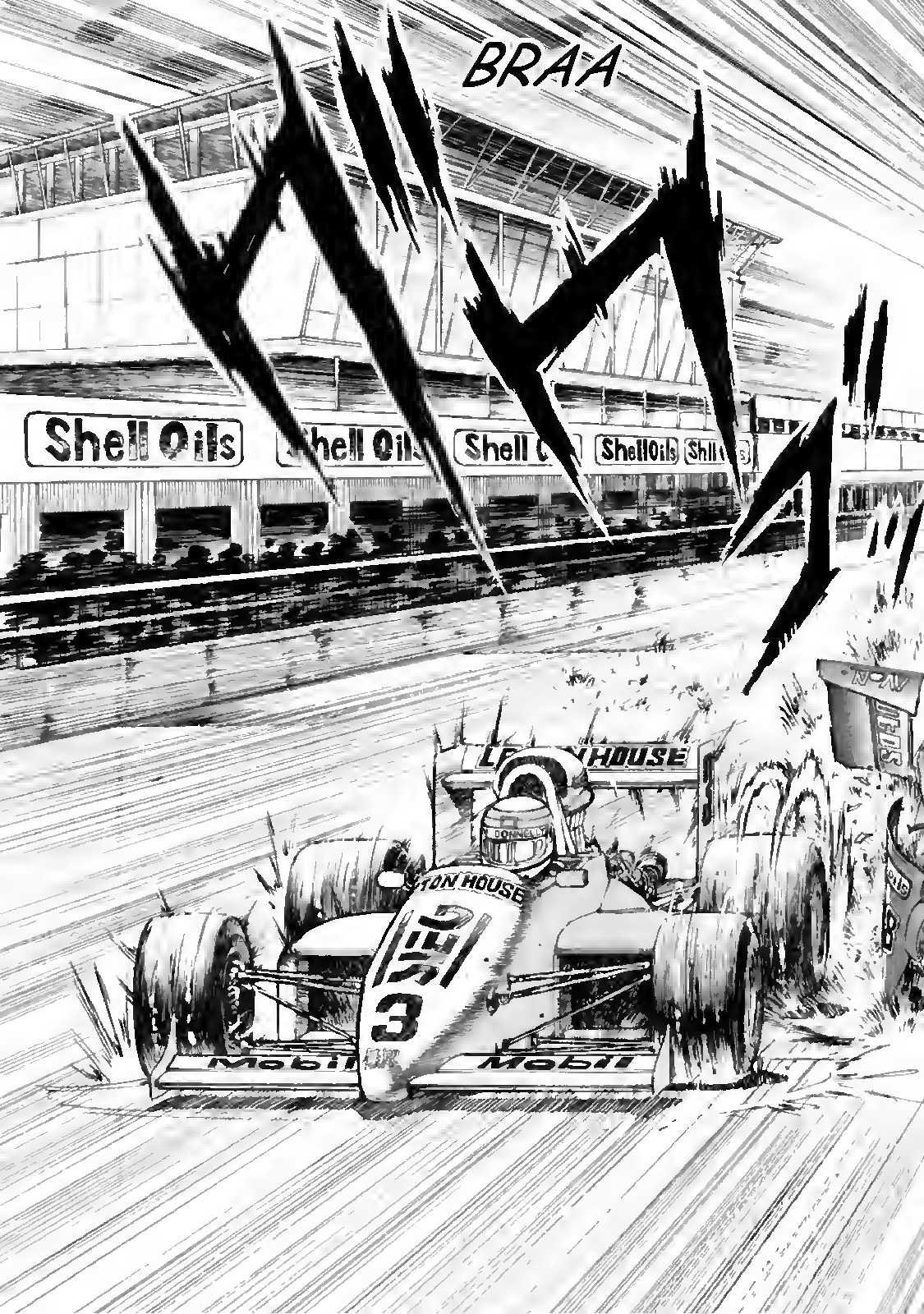



And when the president of a large, well-known company went to check on one of his subsidiaries, they rolled out a red carpet in the hallway, with employees lining up on each side to greet him, as if he's some sort of royalty.
I remember when one politician lost a game of shogi to his secretary, he got so angry that he tried to hit her.

That's right.
SQUEEZE
Great, I'm already getting lectured on our honeymoon.
...but on the other hand, they possess the untiring power, and uncaring cruelty of a child who always gets his way.
In one sense, they have the grand vision of a cold, calculating adult...
So let's enjoy our day here.
Stop criticizing these people...
Rebuilding Akagi Group into something great again.
You've got a very important job waiting for you after all, Shoma.
...!
...or hate him if you'd rather do that.
Cheer on your former brother while he races...
...and lose yourself in the moment.
OOOOOH
ZOOOOOM


BRAA
GRRSHHH
Shell Oils
Shell Oils
Shell Oils
ShellOils
HOUSE
HOUSE
3
Mobil
Mobil
mobos
UGO

GRRSHHH
MUGEN


BRAA
Shell Oils
Shell Oils
Shell
ShellOils
Shell
3
Mobil
Mobil

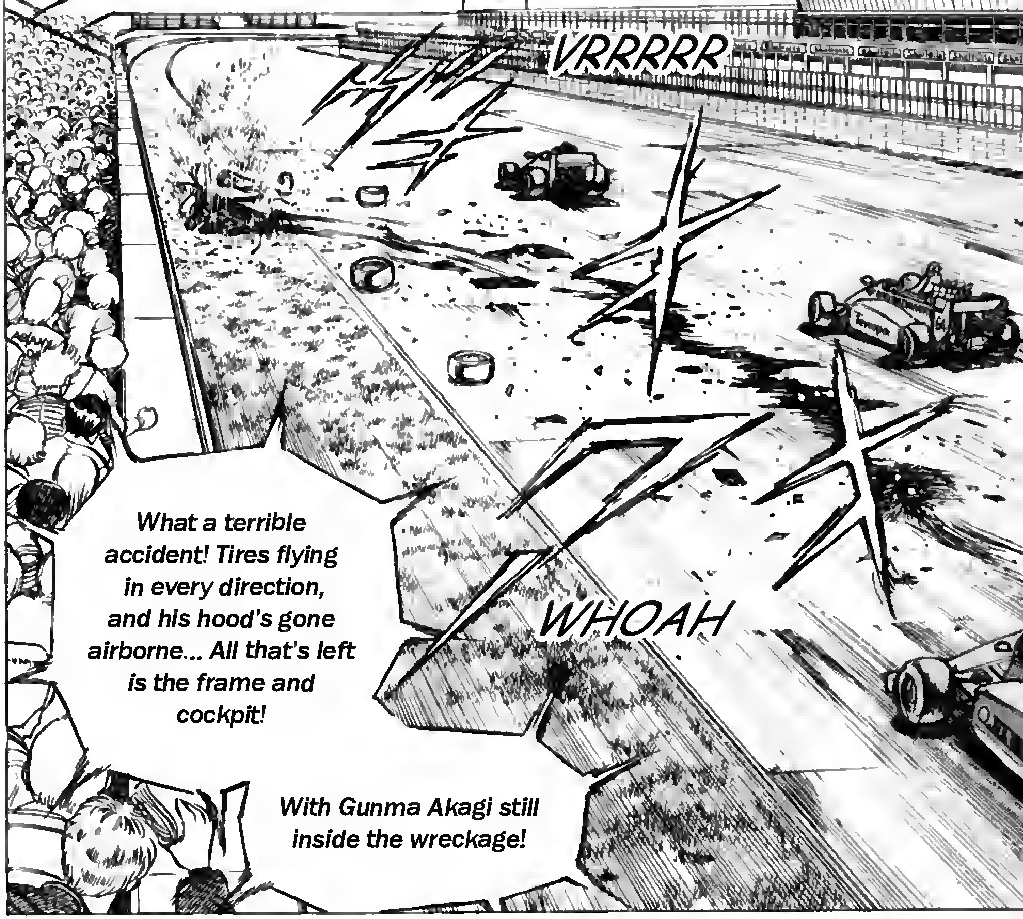
!!

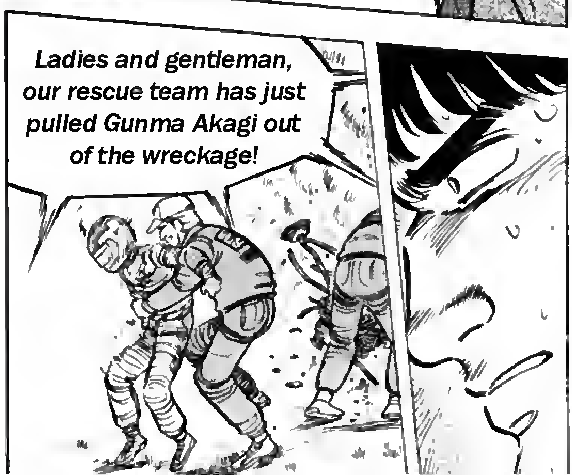
SCREEECH
AVON
38

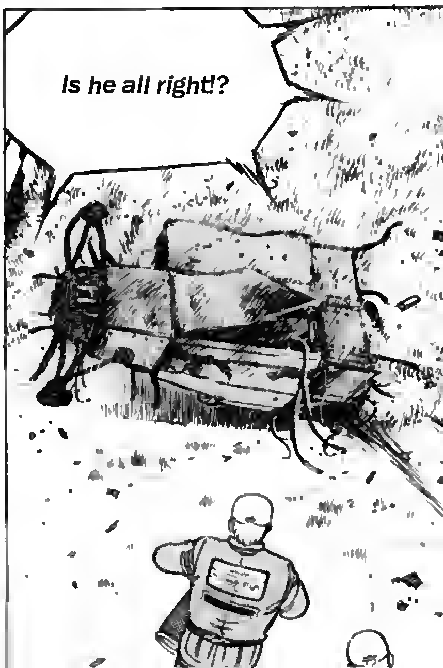
There's been an accident! No. 38 Gunma Akagi has collided with first place driver Martin Donnelly!

KABOOM

SHAAKAKAKAK
Gun-
ma...
AKAGI
GRAGAGAHH


VRRRRR
WHOAH
What a terrible accident! Tires flying in every direction, and his hood's gone airborne... All that's left is the frame and cockpit!
With Gunma Akagi still inside the wreckage!

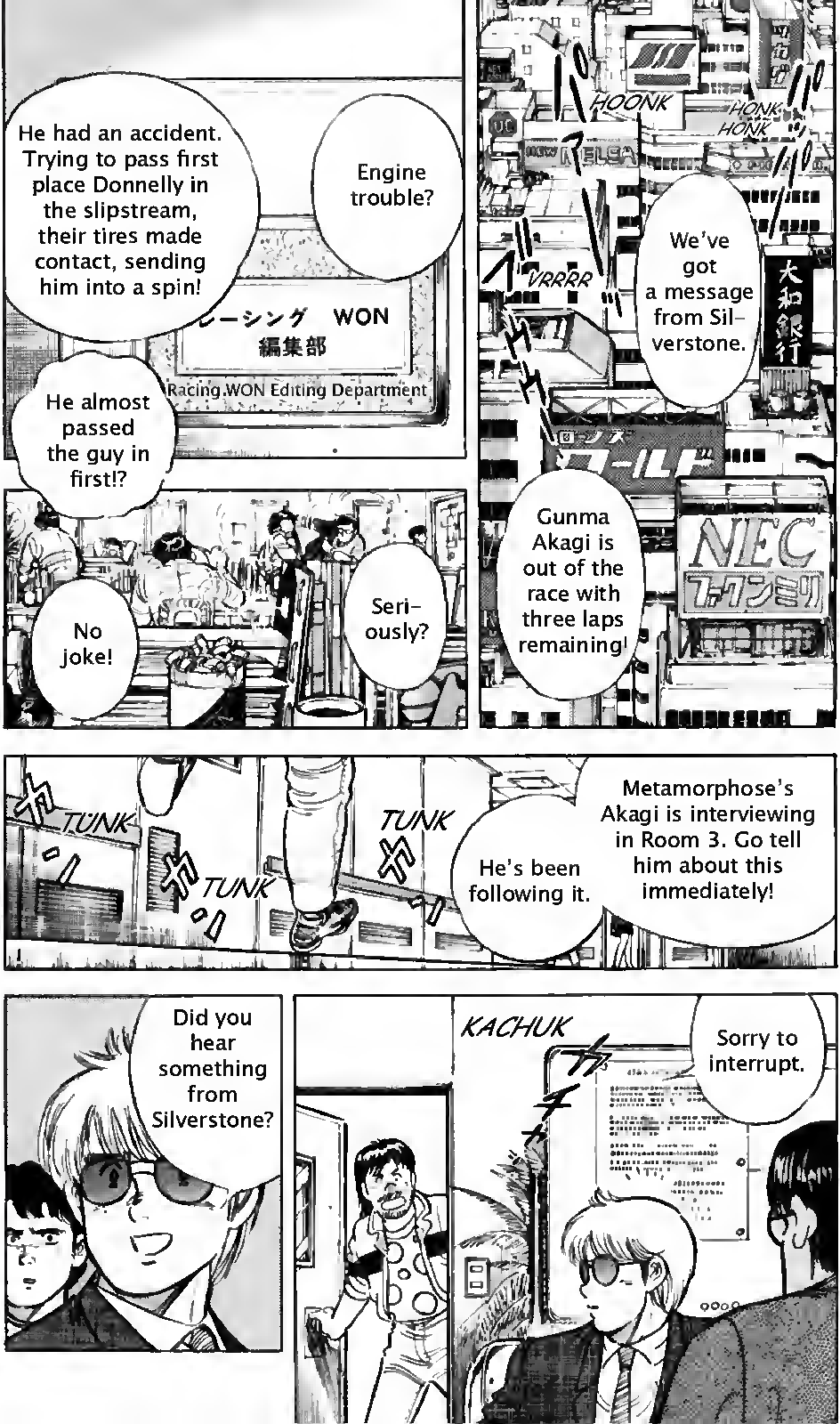

Ladies and gentleman, our rescue team has just pulled Gunma Akagi out of the wreckage!


Is he all right!?

THUD
God damn it!
Shut up! Get off me!
You all right!?
I was almost in first... I almost had it...
How can this be happening!?
Raaaaaaaah!!!
GUNMA

WOOHOO
Gunma Akagi is fine! He's just fine!
He's more than fine! Letting out a howl of fury and frustration with incredible energy after being dragged to safety!
What a remarkable individual! He's won over the crowd with his passion!
...
He's actually kinda sexy...

Chapter 10:
Who the Goddess Prefers


He had an accident. Trying to pass first place Donnelly in the slipstream, their tires made contact, sending him into a spin!
Engine trouble?
レーシング WON 編集部
Racing.WON Editing Department
He almost passed the guy in first!?
No joke!
Seri-ously?
HOONK
HONK-HONK
VRRRR
We've got a message from Sil-verstone.
大和銀行
NEC
Gunma Akagi is out of the race with three laps remaining!
TUNK
TUNK
TUNK
He's been following it.
Metamorphose's Akagi is interviewing in Room 3. Go tell him about this immediately!
Did you hear something from Silverstone?
KACHUK
Sorry to interrupt.

After starting from the 12th spot on the grid, he suddenly passed up seven cars in six laps...
...moved up fast in the rankings, dropped into the slipstream of the guy in first with three laps left...
...then fell into spin and totaled his car, going out of the race.
Out of the race?
That's right. We just received word from our contact at the site.
Pfff! Ha ha ha ha!
He blew it again! Ha ha ha!
Wow ...
Typical Gunma ...

...
Ha ha ha! What a piece of work that guy is! Heh heh...
BREHHH
... Otoya?
What would you have done...
I can't stop laughing! Heh heh heh...
Going to Europe alone, finally getting your big break in F3000...
Hm!?
First and foremost, I'd drive carefully, like a professional!
You know what I'd do!
...how would you have handled it?
...and in the very first race...
Of course you would!
That's how I'd handle it too.
I'd aim for sixth place or so, then work my way up little by little. It is the big leagues after all.
Of course I wanna win, but I wouldn't be so reckless in the first race.

A good driver needs three traits to succeed.
Cool judgment, precise calculation, and a burning desire to win!
The Goddess of Victory favors a guy with those traits!
That's why she's payin' no attention to Gunma!
HA-HA-HA
I hope you're right.
Hm!?
The Goddess is a woman after all.
And a woman's mind isn't easy to figure out.
VRRRR
VROOOH
I don't think she'd be attracted to such a boring guy forever.
Hmph! We got nothin' to worry about!

You really fear Gunma, don't you, Yuma.
This is gettin' good!
If you can win the next race, I want to enter you in Pau or Jerez by summer.
Either way, there's no room for screwing around now in our plan to get you to F1.
No kid-ding?
Heh! You still got a lot to learn about racing.
Instead of taking the safe route by aiming for sixth place or so, he suddenly crashes and burns closing in on the top spot? His power is overwhelming.
Yes, he scares me. He really does.
SCREEEECH
Woohah!
What are you doing!?
If Gunma was calm and cool and aimed for sixth place, then I'd be scared of him.
Check this out!

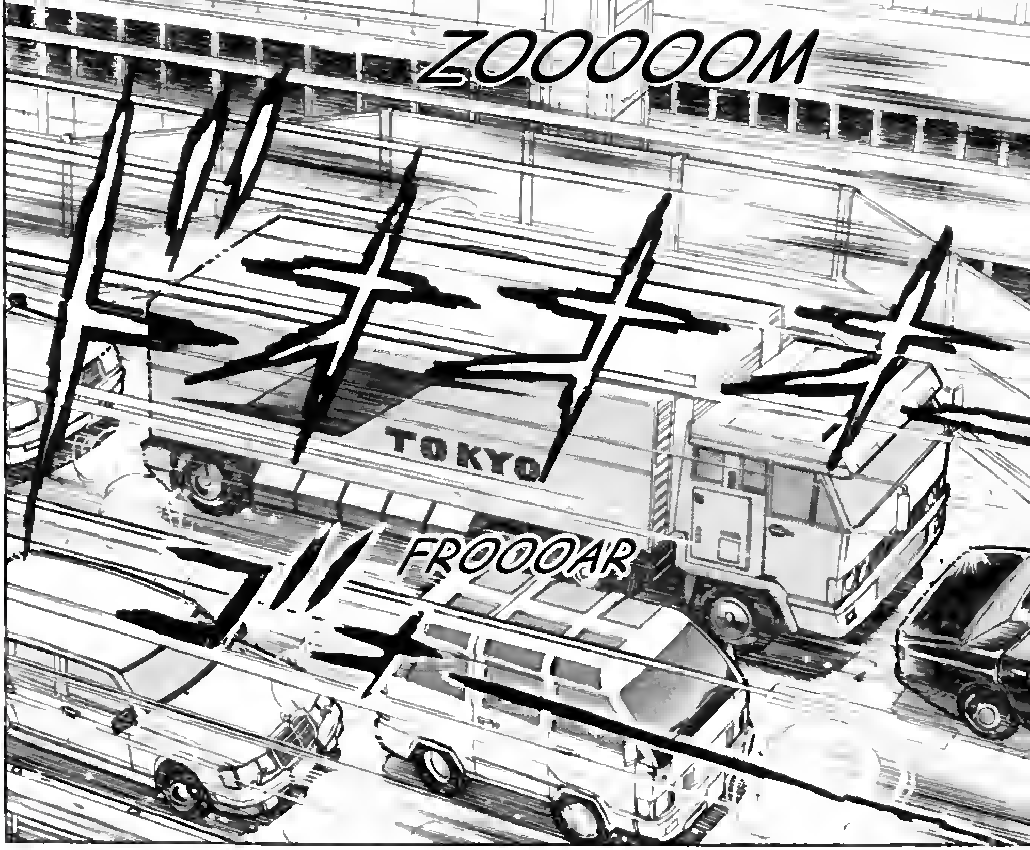
Idiot! You're going the wrong way on the freeway!
Cool judgment, precise calculation, and a burning desire to win.
I'll show you what it takes...
...to be a professional!
SHANK
KUNK
Otoya ...
HONNNK
VROOOOOH

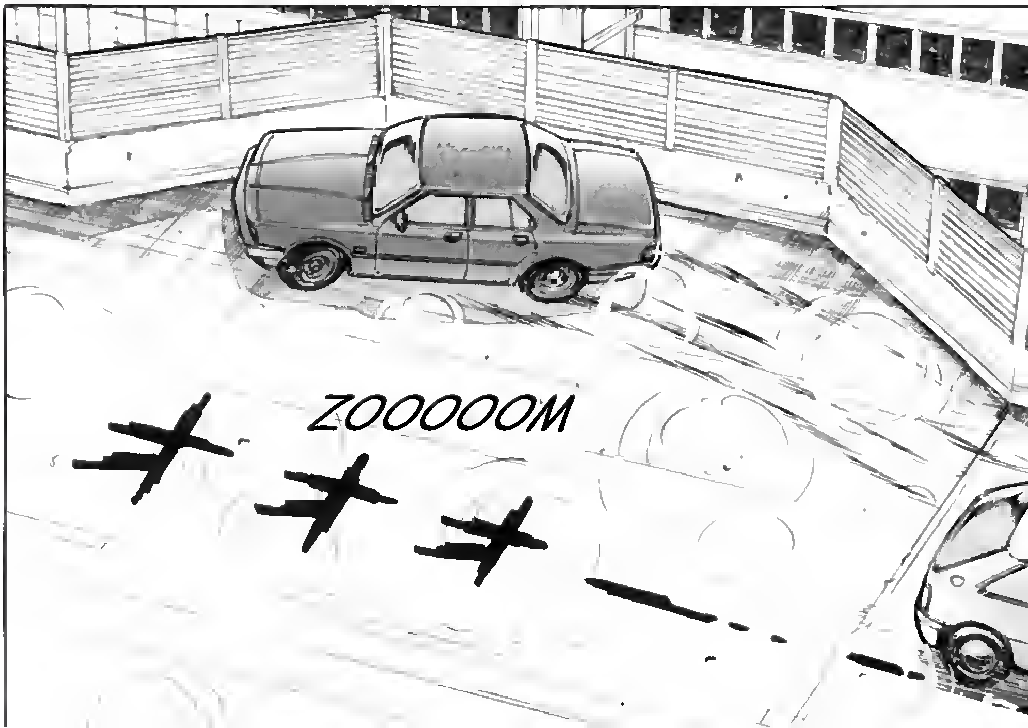
Are they gonna turn, hit the brakes, or freeze up and keep coming at us? Just gotta look at their eyes and make a quick judgment!
We've got a truck, a wagon, another truck, and a car.
Right.
WHOA
GULP
SWISH
SWOSH
VERRR T

VROOOOOAHH
Stop! We're gonna crash!
Next up, they're side by side!
...!
ZOOOM
Relax. The car on the left will hit the brakes.
SCREEEK

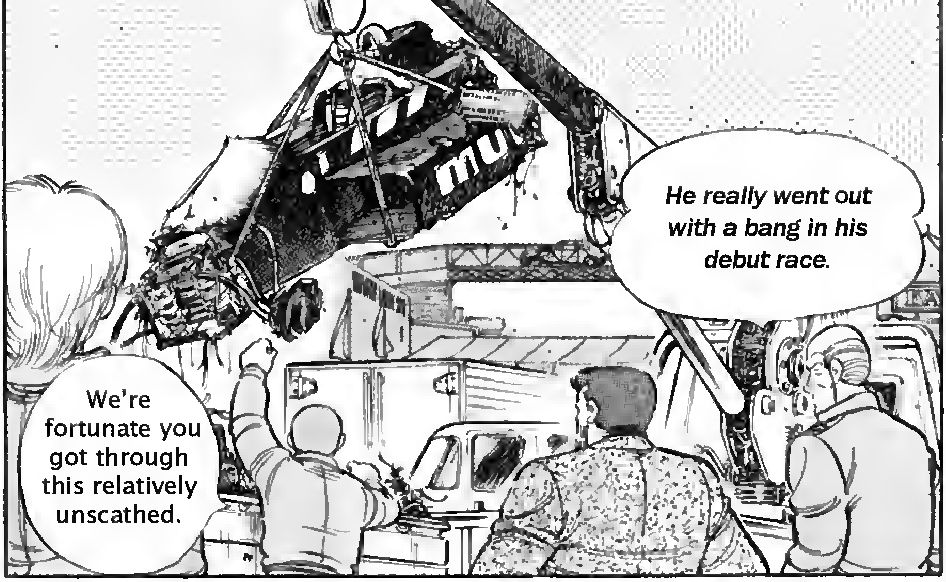
VROOOH
VRRR
Here's the corner ...
That's right old man, to the out-side!
Ahhh!
!!
IRRRRRK

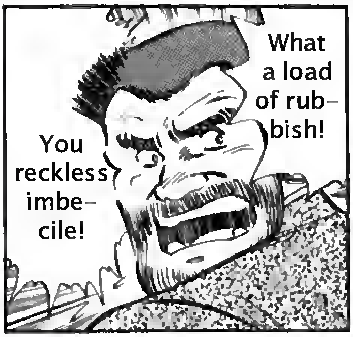
Time for the grand finale!
HONK
VROOOOH
There's a bunch of cars up ahead!
VROOOOOOOH

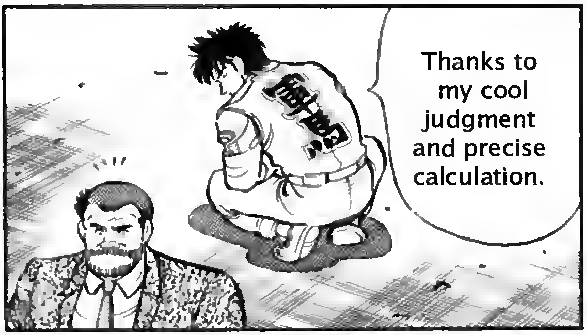

ZOOOOOM
TOKYO
FROOOAR

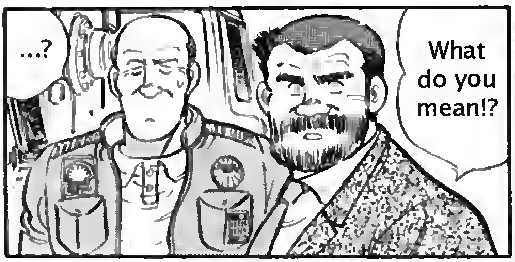

ZOOOOOM

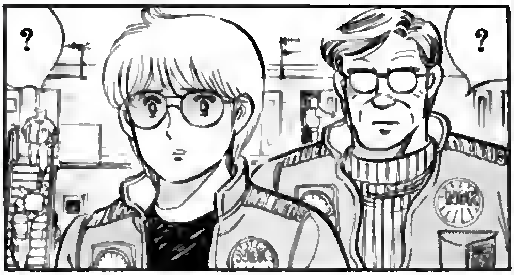
Is your heart okay?
Urgh ...
...
I knew there was an emergency pullout here. All part of my calculation. Ha ha ha...
See where I'm coming from now?
...
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
That's none of your concern...
That's what counts.
Just as long as you get my drift.
This was a valuable experience for me. But if my heart was in better shape, I would've punched you in the face.
I get it... You're good.


He really went out with a bang in his debut race.
We're fortunate you got through this relatively unscathed.

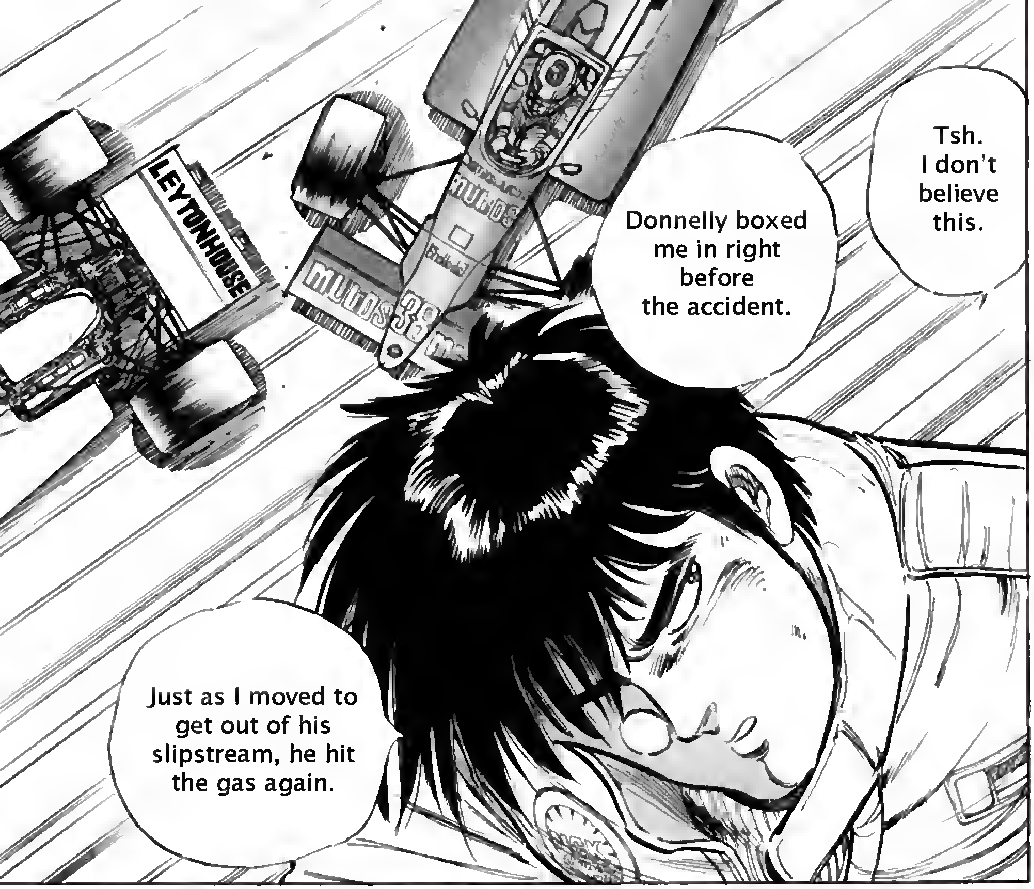

What a load of rub-bish!
You reckless imbe-cile!


Thanks to my cool judgment and precise calculation.


...?
What do you mean!?

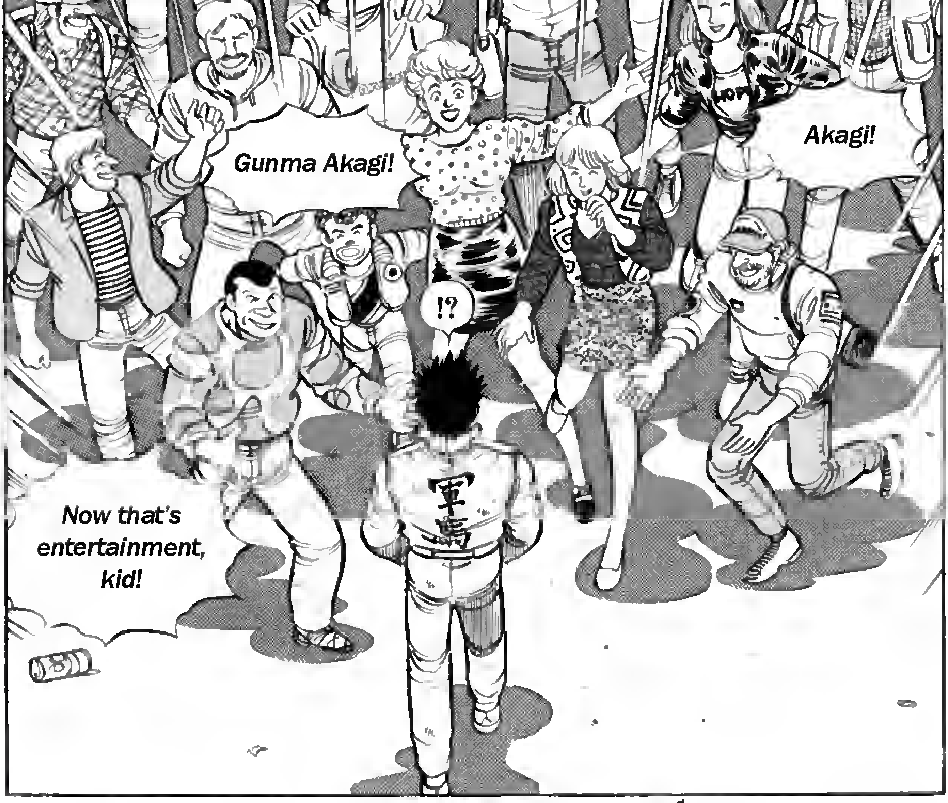

?
?

Weren't you watching, Orman?

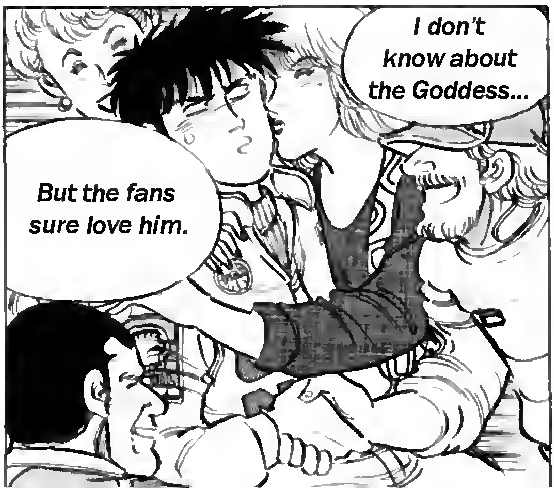

LEYTONHOUSE
Tsh.
I don't
believe
this.
Donnelly boxed
me in right
before
the accident.
Just as I moved to
get out of his
slipstream, he hit
the gas again.

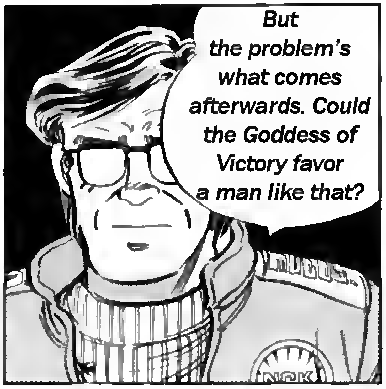
To
spin on
purpose?
Thanks to
my cool judgment
and precise
calculation, I
turned to
the right and
stepped on
the gas.
Is that
it!?
So that his
back wheels
would move
into my
driving line.
I woulda
smacked into
his back tires
and went
airborne if
I didn't do
nothin'.

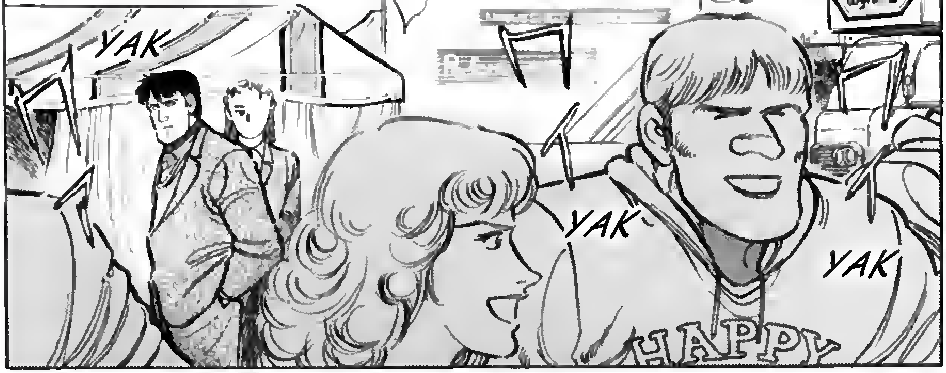
Nope, I turned the opposite way, but kept on spinnin'.
But you couldn't recover.
I was thinkin' that, even if I was two or three cars behind, I still had three laps to catch up, if I could recover from the spinout.
It's better than goin' airborne, ain't it?
Yup.
So the tires flew off, the hood was destroyed, and the frame was crushed.
Yup.
Then you suddenly regained your traction and rolled it.
Well, my only regret is...
So how the hell is that cool judgment and precise calculation by any stretch!?
...from Macau last year.
I was a mar-ked man.
...I forgot Donnelly had a little payback comin' my way...

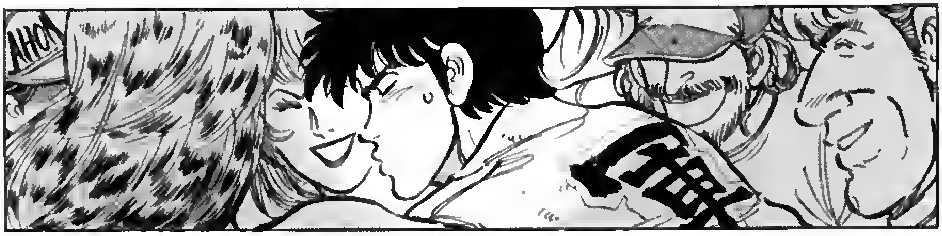

Gunma Akagi!
Akagi!
!?
Now that's entertainment, kid!

Don't talk like that. He was fighting for first place, after all.
YAK
Cool judgment and precise calculation my arse.
More like reckless, half-brained stunt driving!
YAK.


I don't know about the Goddess...
But the fans sure love him.


But the problem's what comes afterwards. Could the Goddess of Victory favor a man like that?


YAK
YAK
YAK
HAPPY

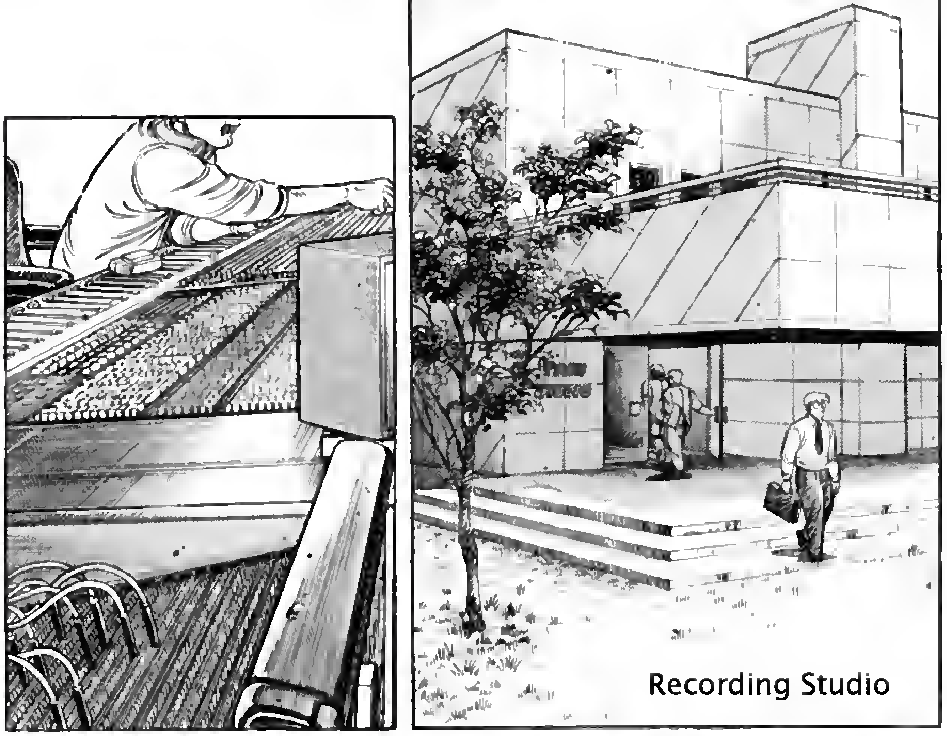

AHO!

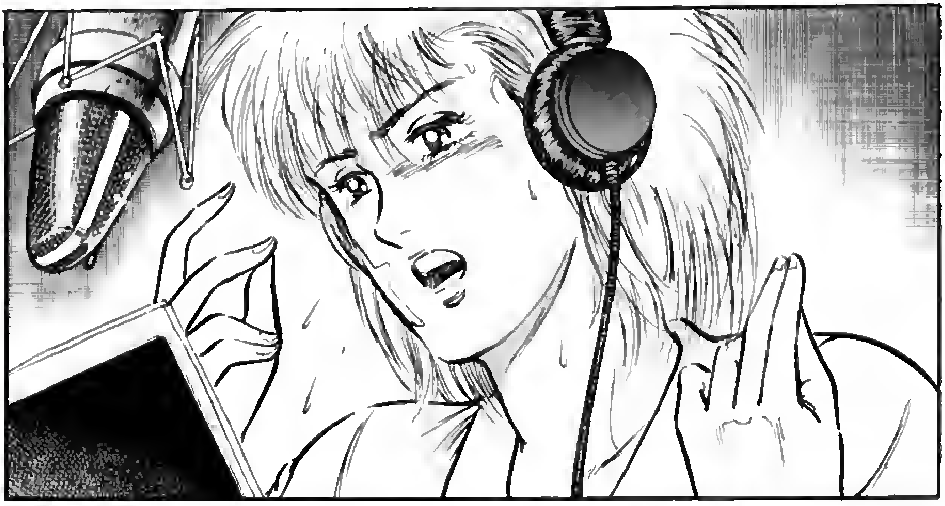
I swear it!

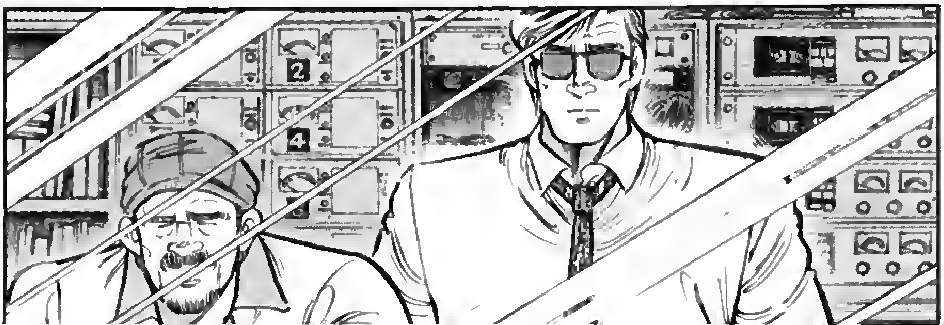
I swear I'll get you back someday.
Just watch yourself, Gunma. I'll never forgive you!

Chapter 11:

Like a Rolling Stone

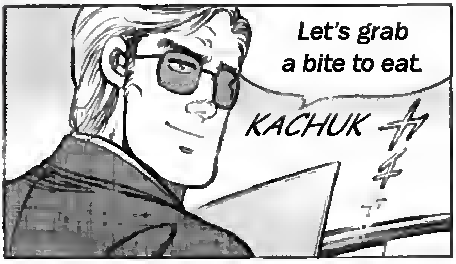

Recording Studio



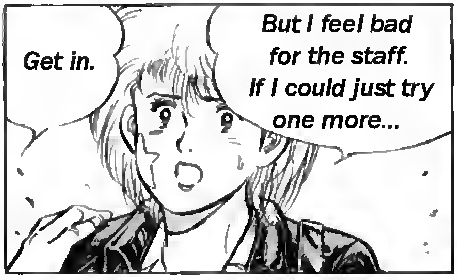


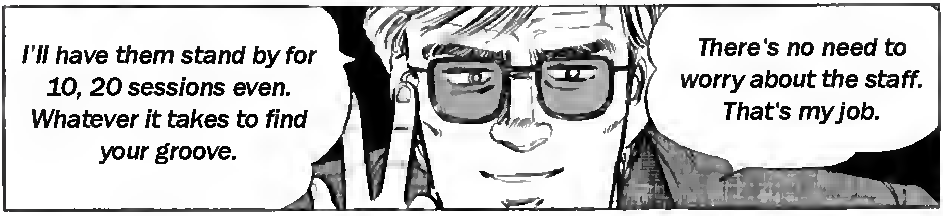
We'll call it quits for now.
Wait, George...
That's enough, Sako!
...
That's a wrap for the day.

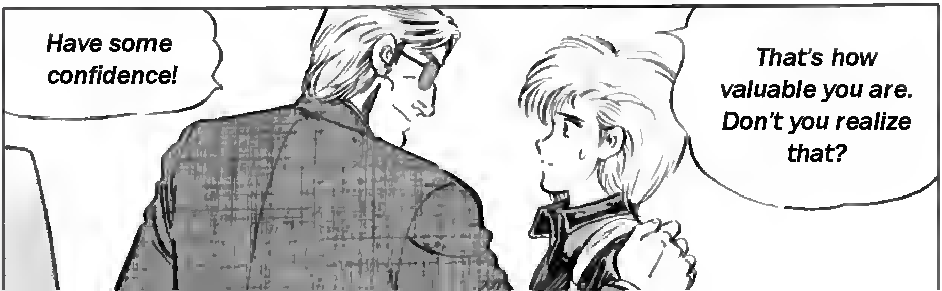
George...


Let's grab a bite to eat.
KACHUK

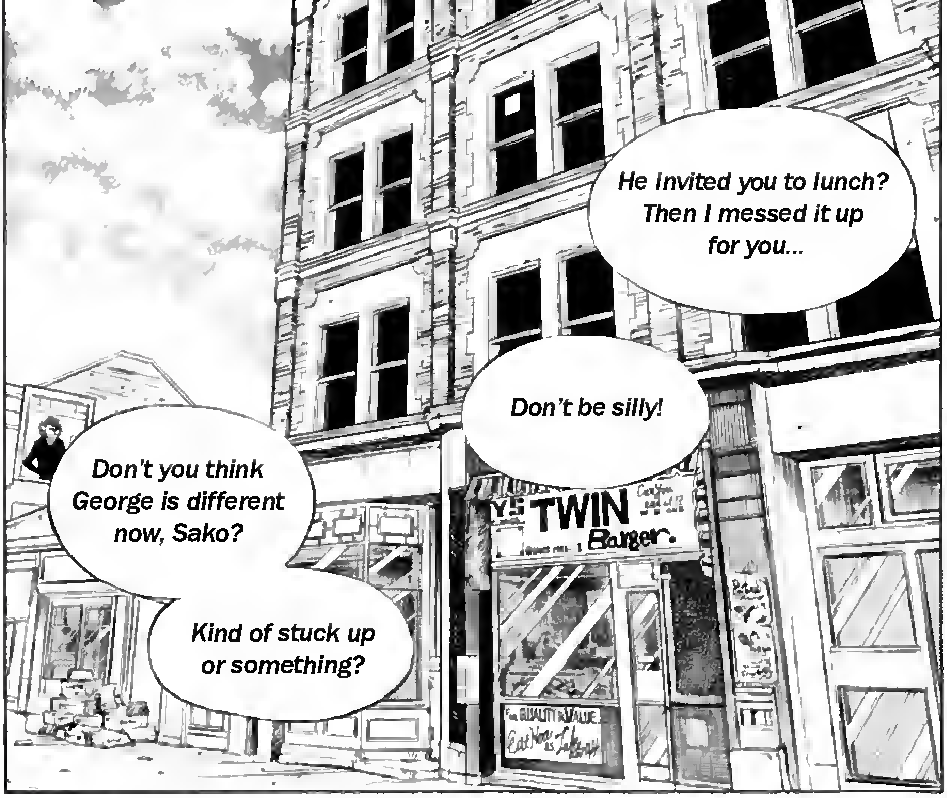
Nothing to worry about. Today was just a rehearsal.
I'm sorry, I was just nervous. It was my first session after all, I just couldn't get into it...


Get in.
But I feel bad for the staff. If I could just try one more...

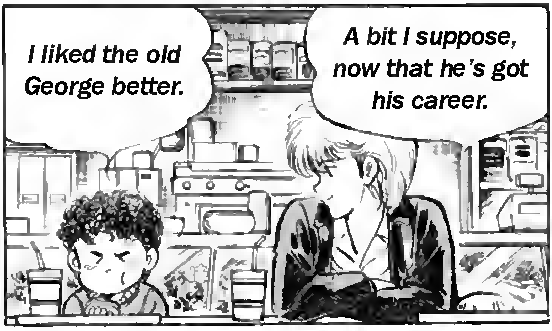

I'll have them stand by for 10, 20 sessions even. Whatever it takes to find your groove.
There's no need to worry about the staff. That's my job.


Have some confidence!
That's how valuable you are. Don't you realize that?

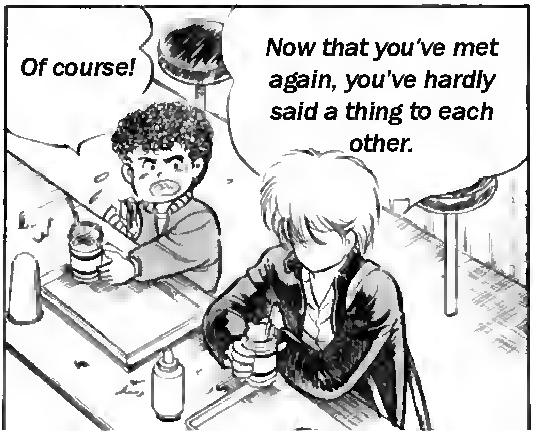
Now let's eat. I know this great Indian place.
All right, darling?
But Peabow's waiting for me.
I'm sorry, George.
...
Very well, then. We'll make it a rain check.
SLAM
VRRRR
Fine, I suppose... But I know this great hamburger place down the street. Let's go have a taste!
How was the recording, Sako?


He invited you to lunch? Then I messed it up for you...
Don't be silly!
Don't you think George is different now, Sako?
Kind of stuck up or something?
TWIN
Burger

He was like a father to you.


I liked the old George better.
A bit I suppose, now that he's got his career.

He abandoned us! What do you expect me to say to him!?


Of course!
Now that you've met again, you've hardly said a thing to each other.

...
I won't come anymore if I'm bothering you.
...
In some ways, I think George is afraid of you.
So Gunma's more important than being my bodyguard, is he?
BWEERM
Oh, shut it, you. You just wanted to go see Gunma race!
Then stop saying you're in the way, and keep watching over me, Peabow.
No way! Being your bodyguard is my... It's my role in life!
Okay, Peabow?
I love Gunma! And you as well!
George is nothing more than a business partner to me. I've let go of the past, and so should you.

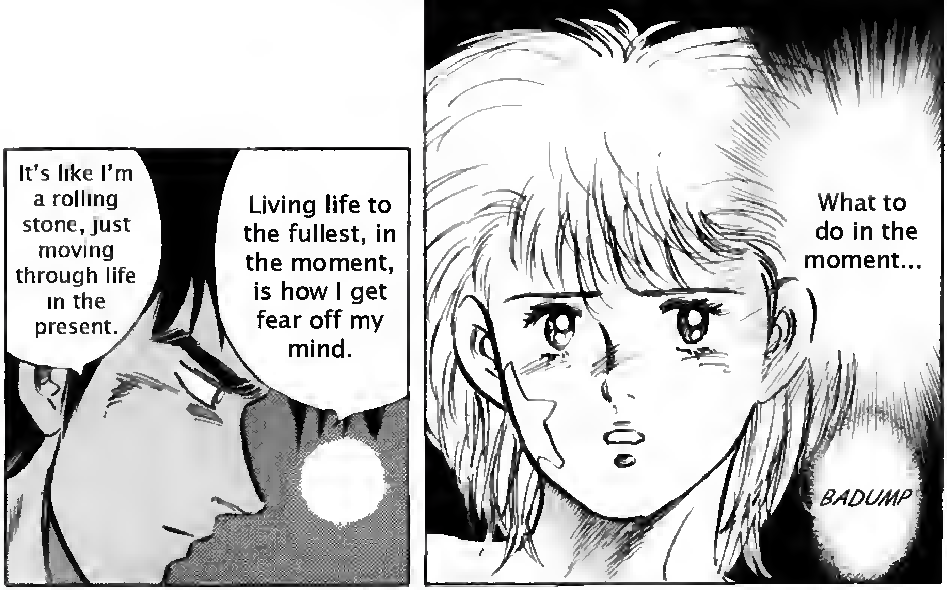
That might be possible!
Can't wait to find out!
Not a chance. It's F3000 after all!
Okay, third place!
How do you think Gunma fared at the race, Sako?
DICK
Maybe he took first place? He's got what it takes.
That could really crush his spirit.
But Peabow, don't act disappointed if things didn't go well, okay?
I know. Even if it was a disaster.
Ha ha ha! Don't worry about it. Gunma's tough!
Family's there to support during times like that.
Or maybe it's better just to leave him alone... Anyway no matter the result...
HANNNG

It's not worth it!
What are you doing!?
Gun-ma!
Gu...
Rrrgh
Urgh!
Wha...
MURRK
This is the wrong way to deal with your prob-lems!
No Gunma! Please don't die!
POP
SPLSHHH

Huff
Huff
Huff
What the hell are you doin', tryin' to kill me!?
I was doing pull-ups you idiot!
But you were just hanging there, and...!
Pull-ups!?
You scared the hell outta me.
I thought I was done for.
Weren't you scared?
Too bad you fell out of the race.
Tell me about it.
It's fine.
Sorry.

Yeah.
Were you okay with all that?
I mean, that fire terrified you before, remember?
Just more of a racer now, I guess.
Not really.
You're strong, Gunma.
I'm already over it.
Yeah, I feel the change every time I get in the car, every time I drive.
A racer?
Now I'm different. I know what fear is, and I can control myself.
But that's all it was. An absence of fear.
I used to be reckless as hell, without a fear in the world.

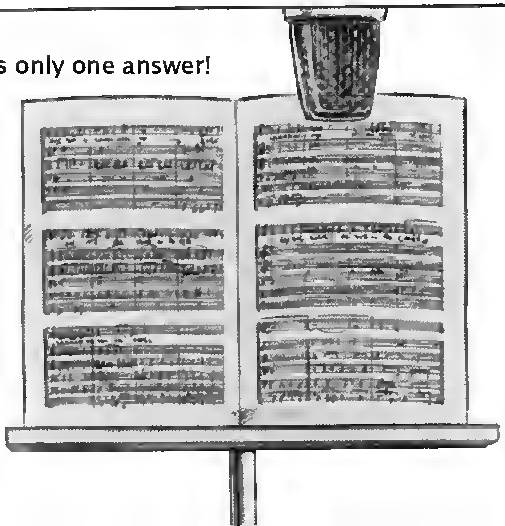
Does that erase the fear?
In the moment?
I ain't got time to be scared now.
Basically, I know what I need to do in the moment.
I can make decisions after thinking things through.
Get it, Sako? It's like, you're not afraid of the present. It's the future that scares you.
The thing that scares you is guessing what'll happen next.
...what fear is exactly.
It's hard to explain...
Having time to dwell on things means you're not taking action, not dealing with issues, not living your life. That's when you gotta figure it out.
When that guy was covered in flames, I was afraid because it was happening to someone else.
And right now you have so much time to think about the future.


What to do in the moment...
BADUMP
Living life to the fullest, in the moment, is how I get fear off my mind.
It's like I'm a rolling stone, just moving through life in the present.

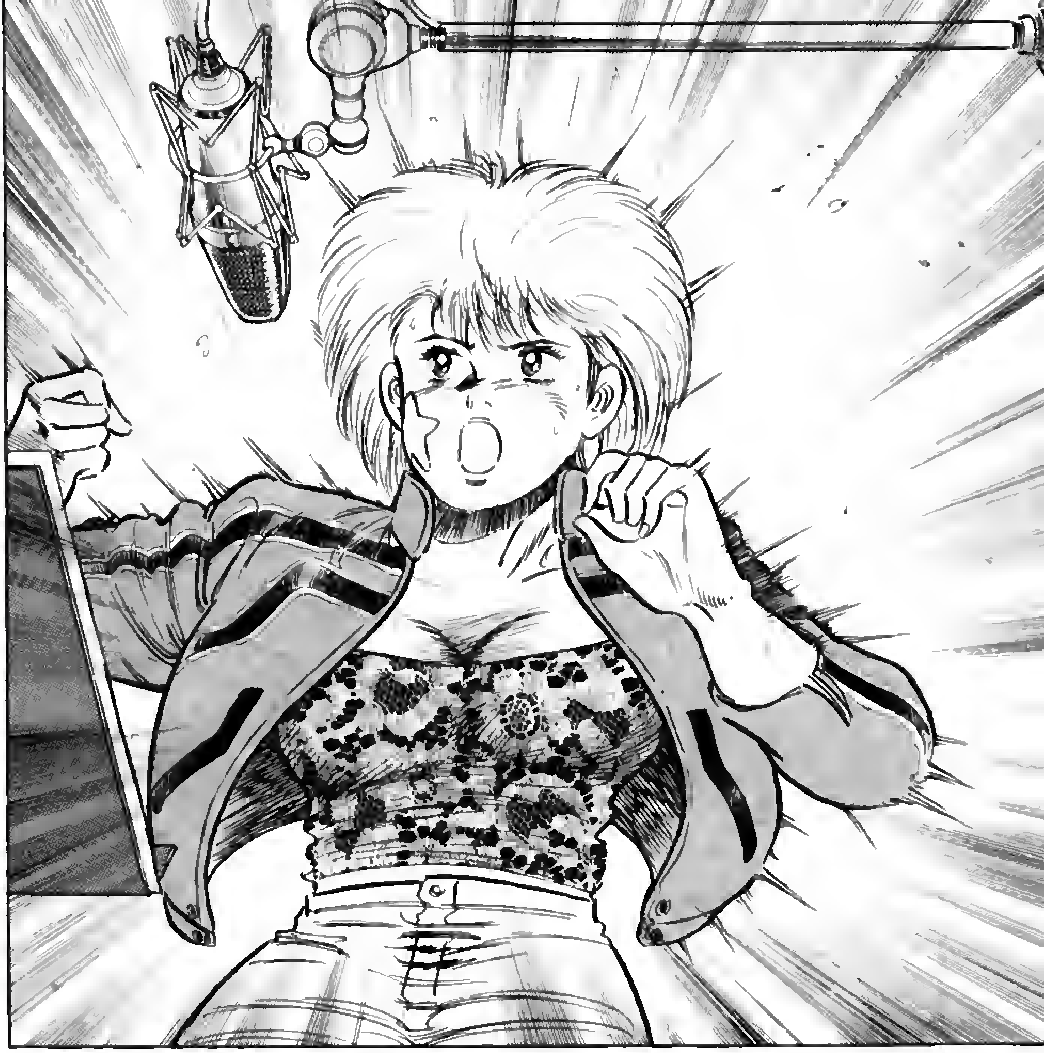
LIKE A ROLLING STONE

I really love you!

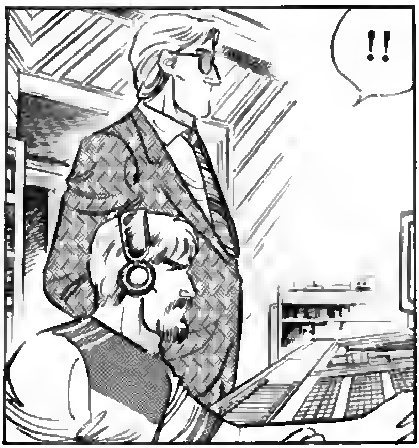
There's only one answer!



Like a rolling stone, no time to think about the future or what's to be, just living for the moment.



GOOD !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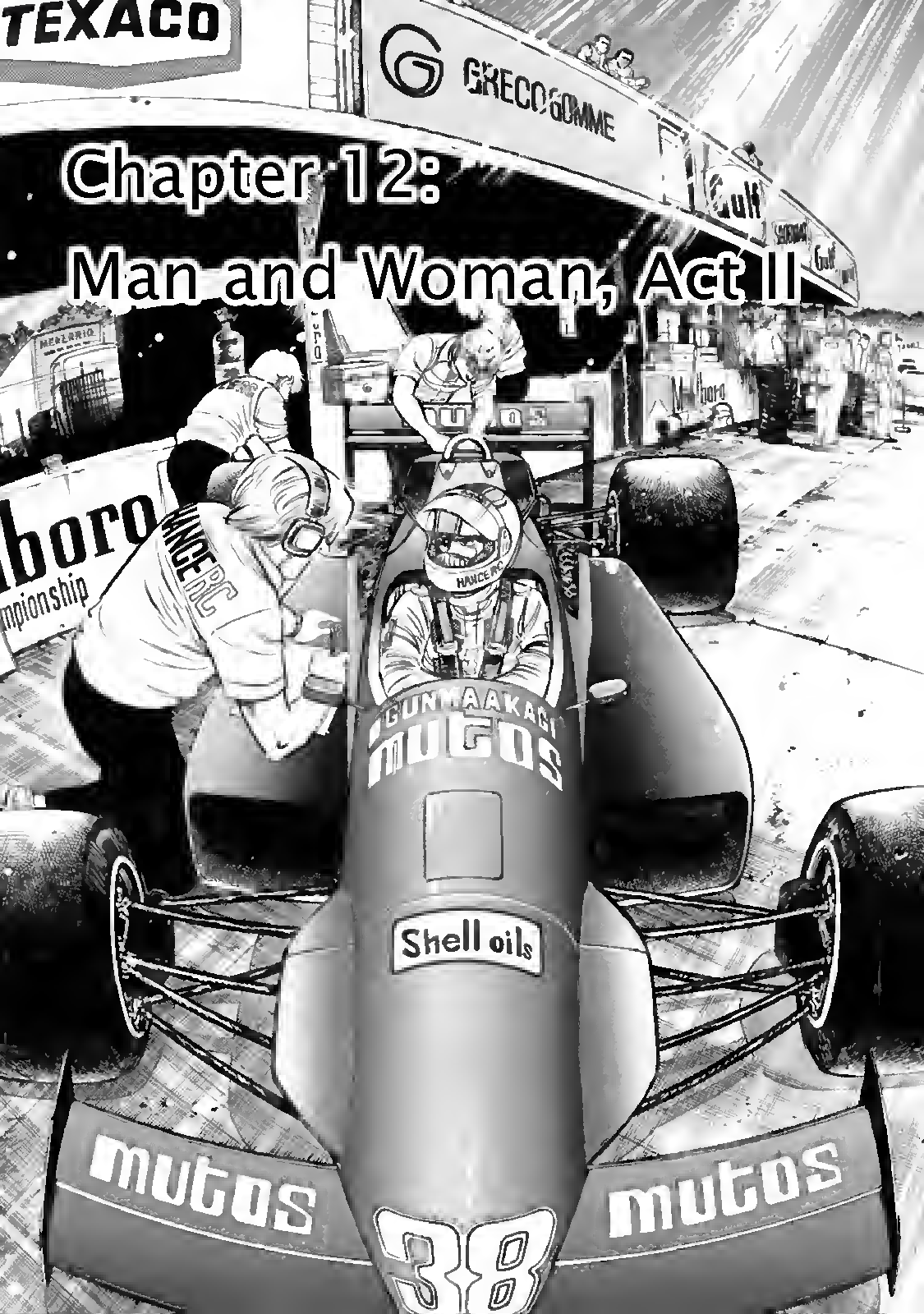
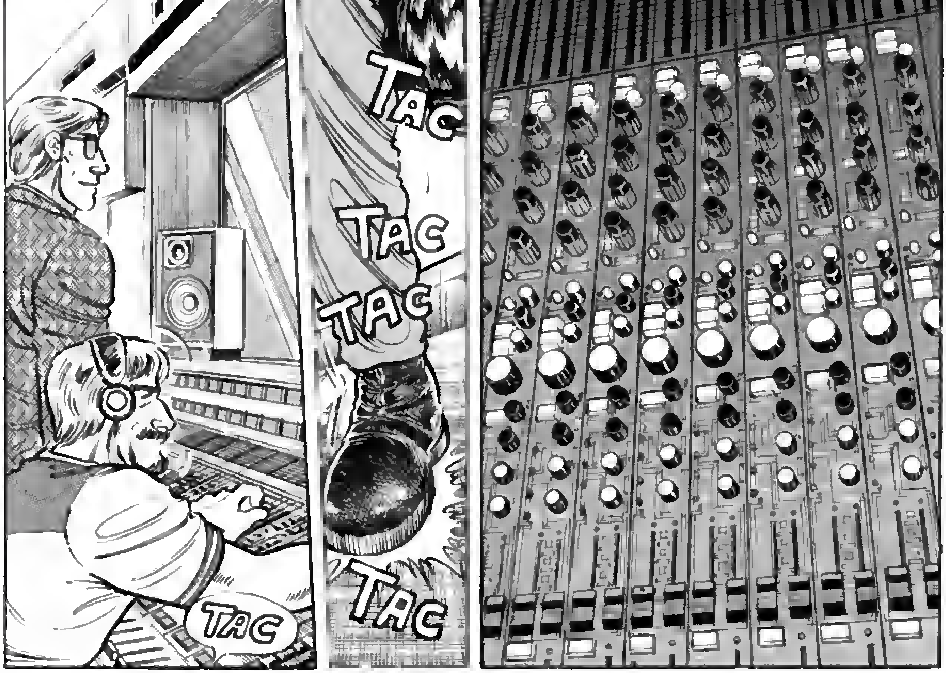

TEXACO
GRECO GOMME
Gulf
Chapter 12:
Man and Woman, Act II
mutos
Shell oils
38


TAC
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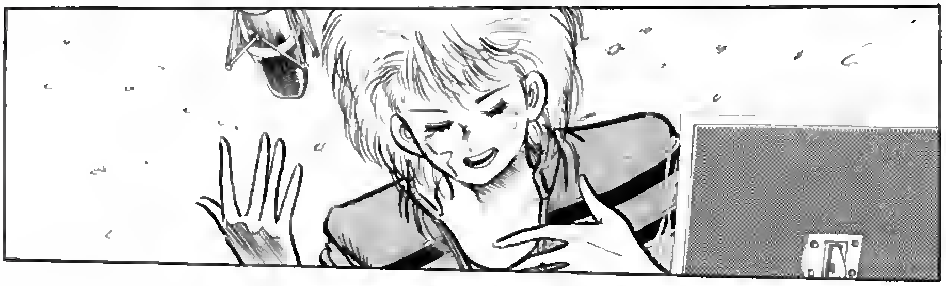
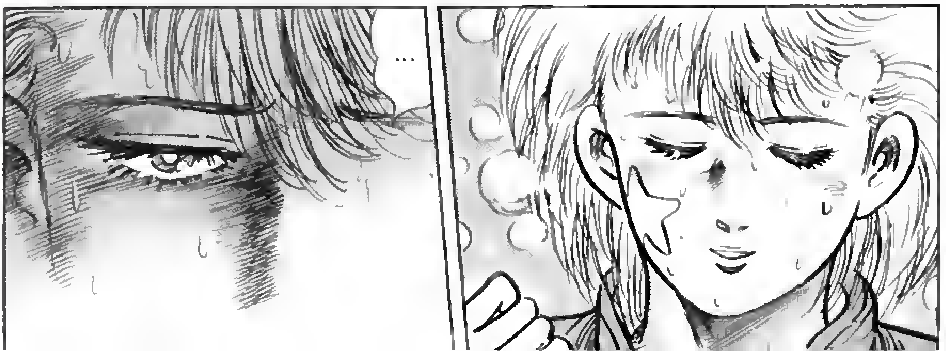


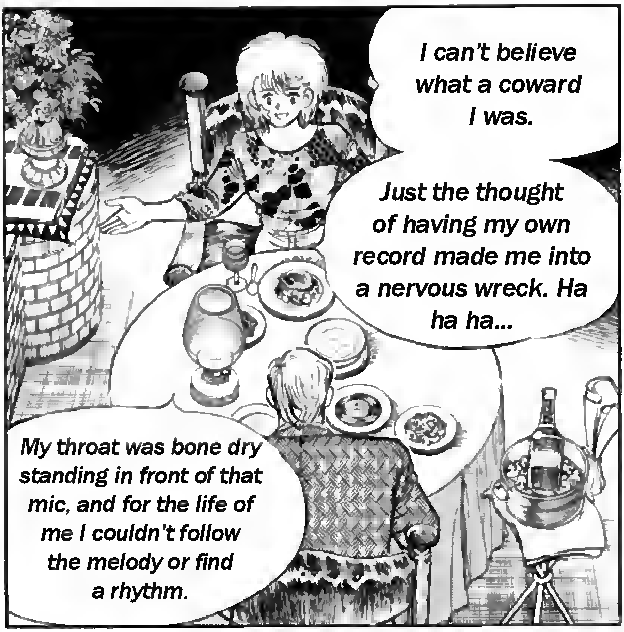

...

Bravo Sako!
That was brilliant!
George...
Was it
really!?
!
Absolutely! That's
the Sako we know
and love from your
nights at the pub!
Outstanding
work!
In fact, I'd say
you're even better
than that! You'll
soon be the toast of
England my dear!

Sako!
Gunma
...
Well done!
That was perfect!
CLAP
Oh...
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP

Thank you, Gunma.
GRIP
CLAP
...you inspired me!
Gunma ...
Sako!
!!
Thank you, George. Thank you...
...

チン！DING
Cheers!


I can't believe what a coward I was.
Just the thought of having my own record made me into a nervous wreck. Ha ha ha...
My throat was bone dry standing in front of that mic, and for the life of me I couldn't follow the melody or find a rhythm.

The pressure was so overwhelming.

It was Gunma, you know. He inspired me.

Each time you said it wouldn't work, I just panicked.
I was terrified, and just wanted to run away from it all.

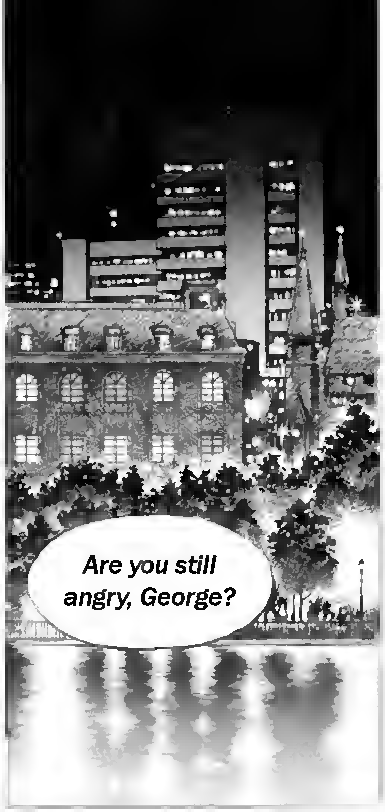
He told me that fear seeps in when trying to predict what'll happen next.
His advice was amazing.
TWITCH
...
MUNCH MUNCH
SNAP
Which is proof that I wasn't living my life! And if I live for the moment, I don't have time to be afraid!
And told me that I'm not afraid of the present, but it's the future that terrifies me.
He really is something.
Isn't that brilliant?
...
MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH
I felt so... naked when he came up with those words!
But that's the philosophy of a racer, you know? A hundredth of a second can determine his fate!

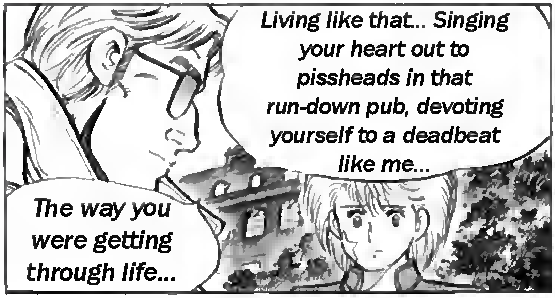
And he was so right. It's the results I was afraid of all along.
Can I sing well enough? Will my record appeal to the masses?
That's all I was thinking about, and it had me terrified before each session.
I'd completely forgotten who and what I was singing for.

CHING
カチャーン
I mean he is so... Hee hee...
Hm hm hm... That's what Gunma taught me about life.
...
Oi, some coffee over here!
Seems I finished everything while you were wrapped up in your little monologue.
Whew, what a meal.
All praise to Gunma!
You're really taken with that Gunma fellow.
But I'll have to admit you were brilliant today.
Please don't get me wrong.
I'm really grateful to you for all this.
George, I didn't mean to...
I was just so happy, I...

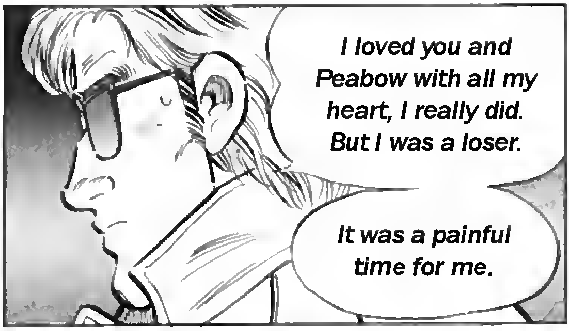
You better eat before it gets cold.
I mean... If it wasn't for the dedication of you and your staff every day... Um... How do I put this...?
I was just too foolish to express... how much I appreciate everything...
I'm not angry. Just a bit jealous is all.
Of your relationship with this Gunma.
Don't be angry, George. I really am thankful!
I noticed Peabow wasn't around today. He's usually waiting for you at the studio.
George...
Hmm...
...
We came in together, but I guess he went home early.

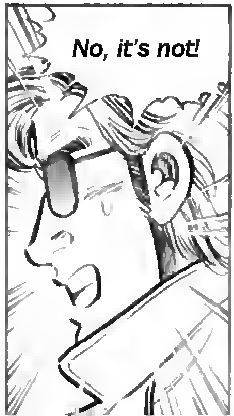
!?
I couldn't stand to see you like that, Sako.

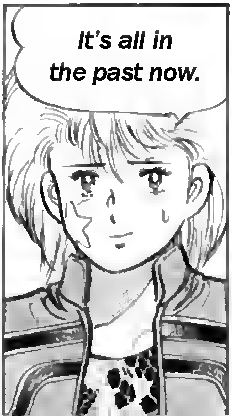

Are you still angry, George?


Living like that.. Singing your heart out to pissheads in that run-down pub, devoting yourself to a deadbeat like me...
The way you were getting through life...

I didn't abandon you. I just couldn't take advantage of you any longer.


I loved you and Peabow with all my heart, I really did. But I was a loser.
It was a painful time for me.


No, it's not!


It's all in the past now.

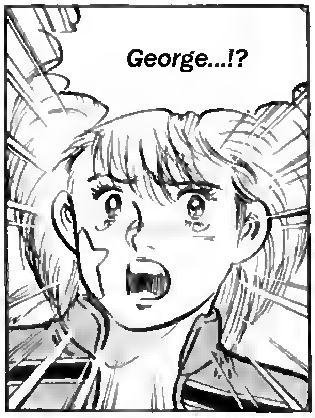
You can't imagine how hard it was for me to leave like that.
But, even so, I just...

It's because I was determined to get you a record deal! I did everything for you!
You're so lovely, so talented, and I had to get you a record!
After that, I made connections with ABC Records, and got a job there. Do you have any idea what was going through my mind!?
Do you even realize why I brown-nosed people, why I did the most degrading work imaginable, just to become a recording director? Do you!?

I even let some queer executive bugger me to secure my position...
And now I'm the butt of an ironic joke. Time can be so cruel, Sako...
George...

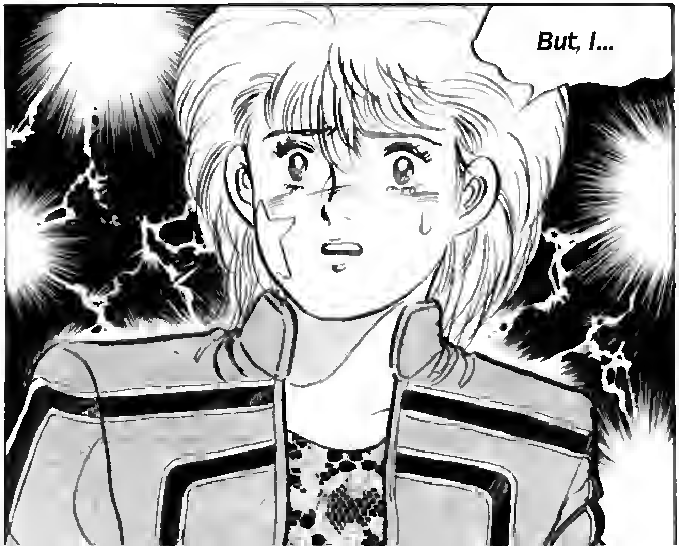
...
HA HA HA
HEH HEH HEH
At last, I was ready to see you again, and you've recorded a masterpiece...
But now this Gunma character has swept you off your feet, stolen your heart away!

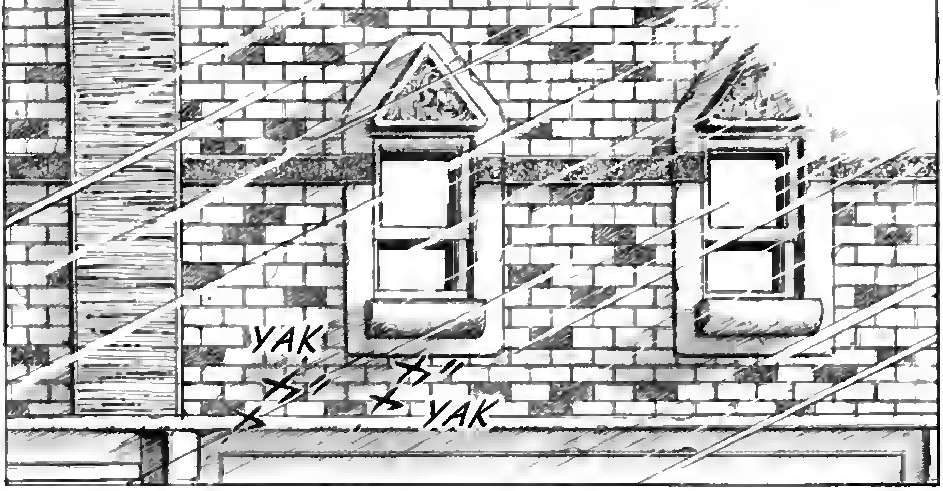
You're terrible, George! Just terrible!
How could I? It was nothing but a fleeting dream back then, with no substance to speak of.
I've been waiting for you all this time. It was all for you.
Don't talk like that now. You never said a thing to me all this time.
You should've told me how you felt. You should have come back and seen me.
2051
CLING
!?
It's a spare key, to my room at that hotel.
Don't bring me down like this, not now...

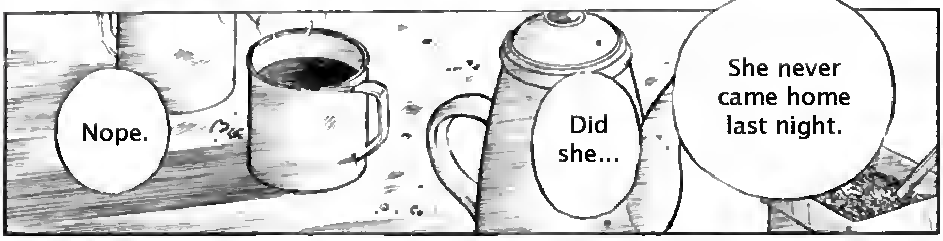

George...!?

I'd be delighted if you'd come, and we get to release your record.
But I fear you may not come, and that record won't see the light of day.

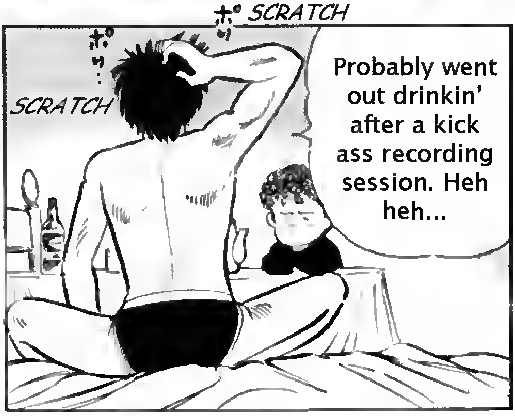
And I trust you'll be joining me tonight.
I'll be there.


But, I...


YAK
YAK

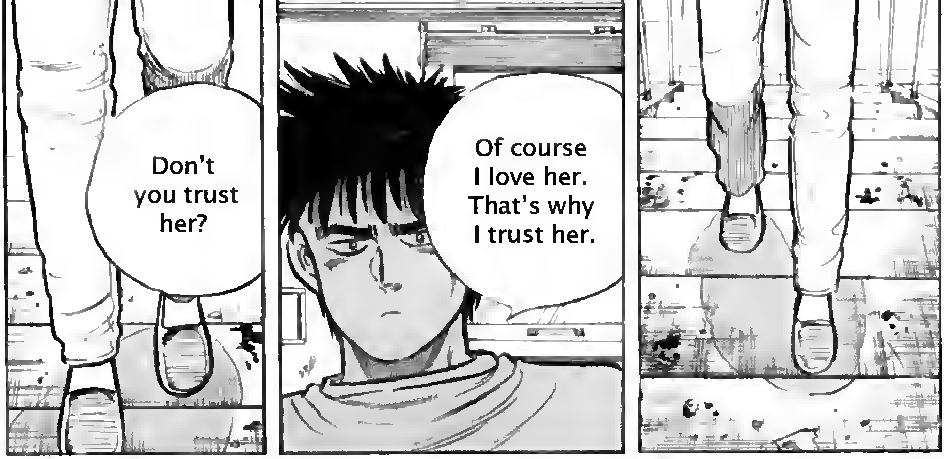

Nope.
Did she...
She never came home last night.

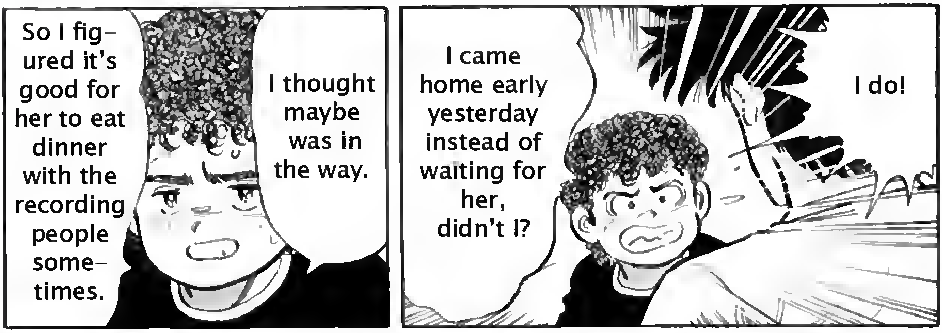
Nothin' wrong with that, every now and again!
Maybe... But staying out all night?

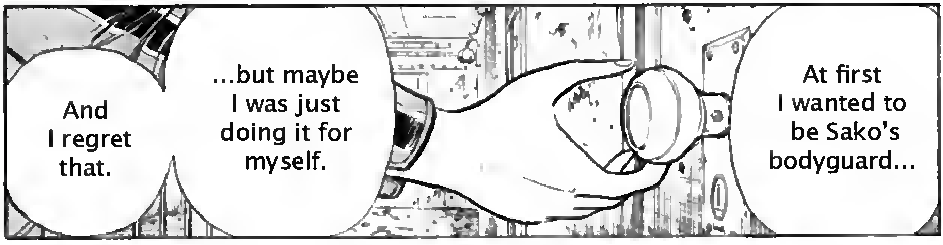

SCRATCH
SCRATCH
Probably went out drinkin' after a kick ass recording session. Heh heh...

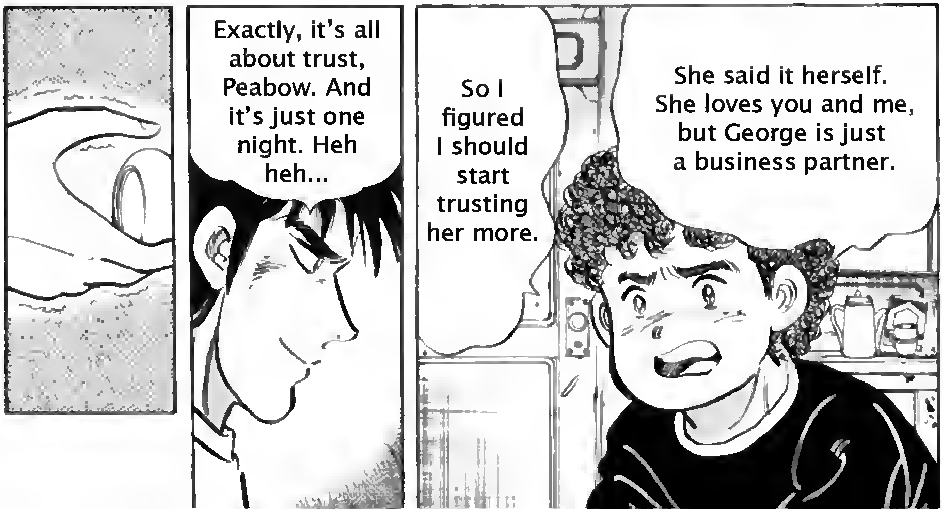
Do you really love Sako!?
Geez, keep it down you little dork.
CAPRI

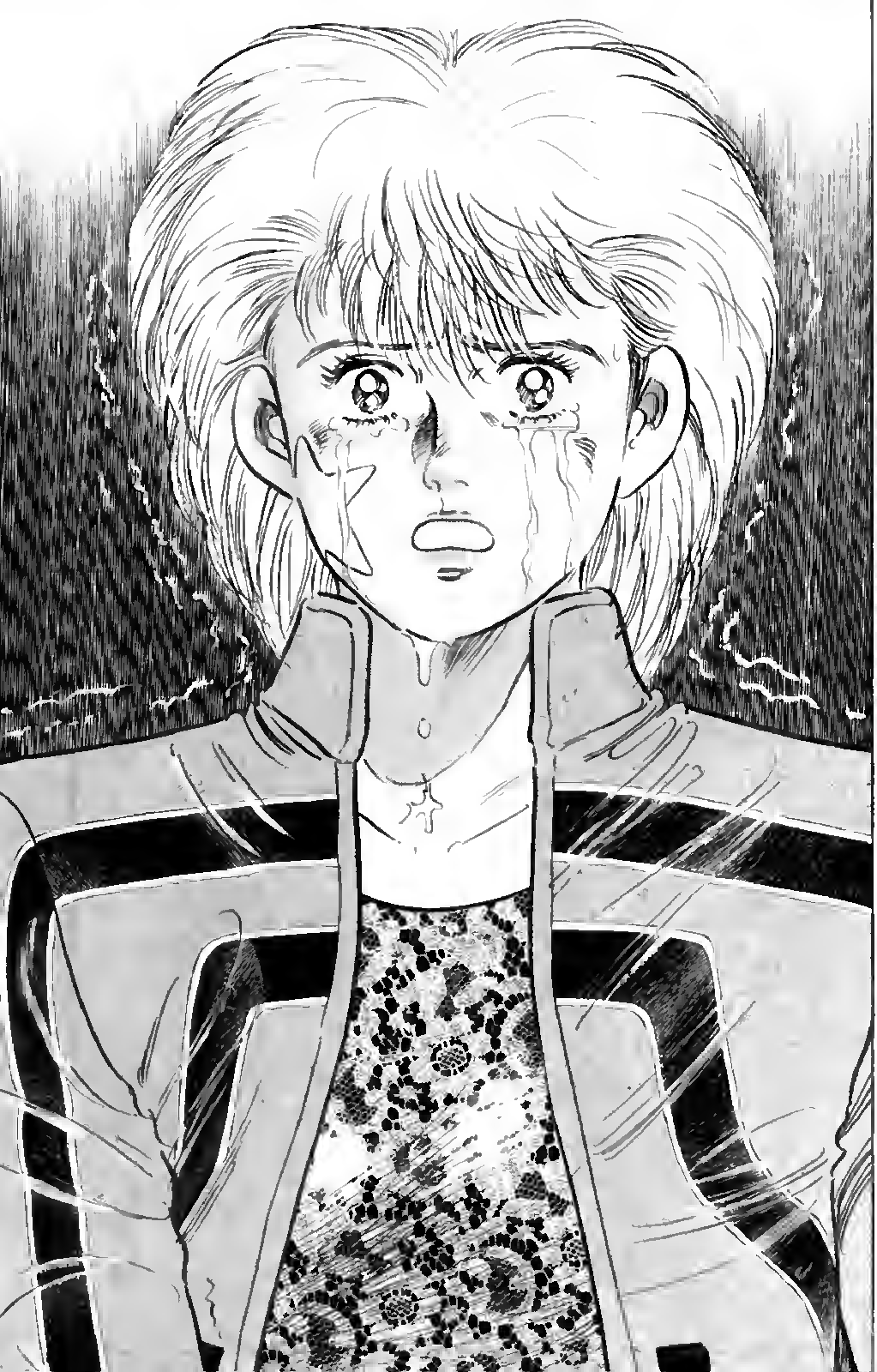
Aren't you worried about her, Gunma!?


Don't you trust her?
Of course I love her. That's why I trust her.


So I figured it's good for her to eat dinner with the recording people sometimes.
I thought maybe was in the way.
I came home early yesterday instead of waiting for her, didn't I?
I do!


And I regret that.
...but maybe I was just doing it for myself.
At first I wanted to be Sako's bodyguard...

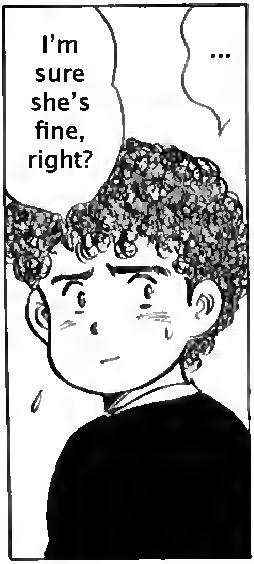

Exactly, it's all about trust, Peabow. And it's just one night. Heh heh...
So I figured I should start trusting her more.
She said it herself. She loves you and me, but George is just a business partner.



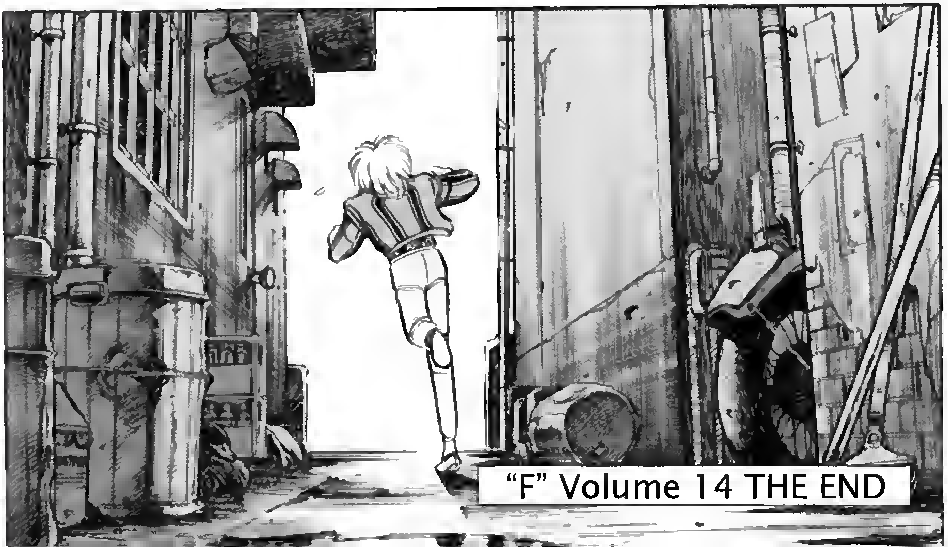
KACHUK
Sako!

TUNK
FROM TIME TO TIME

Of course she is!
TIME TO


I'm sure she's fine, right?
...

Nope, nobody's out here.
Is it her?


"F" Volume 14 THE END

F VOL.14

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First e-book edition-September 2015

Publisher
Creek & River Co., Ltd
C&R Group Bldg.,
2-10-9, Kojimachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo Japan 102-0083

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